SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
TREATISE, entituled,
THE
NATURE, OBLIGATION,
AND
EFFICACY,
OF THE
Chriſtian Sacraments,
CONSIDERED.

Wherein the Nature and Value of Poſitive Inſtitutions is more particularly examined, and Objections anſwered.

By the ſame AUTHOR.

LONDON:
Printed by SAM. ARIS for JOHN CROWNFIELD, at the *Riſing-Sun* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*; and ſold by CORNELIUS CROWNFIELD, Printer to the Univerſity of *Cambridge*. M.DCC.XXX.

SUPPLEMENT.

IN the Close of my Discourse upon the *Sacraments*, &c. I declared, that I should be thankful to any Man that would resume the Subject, and treat it in a *rational* and a *Christian* Manner, to strike *new Light* into it. Two or three Gentlemen have since appeared, and have performed their Parts; but whether in a *rational*, or a *Christian* Manner, let indifferent Readers judge. Thus far I take upon me to say, that they might have afforded us more *Light*, if they had had less *Heat*, and had been careful to preserve the Coolness and Sedateness proper to religious or learned Enquiries. And if amidst all their ardent Zeal for *Morality* in Theory, they had been pleased to exemplify it in Practice, by a strict Observance of the moral Rules for good Writing, they might certainly have succeeded better, and

have done more Honour both to themſelves, and their Subject. Injurious Reflections, and ſtudied Miſrepreſentations are immoral, and are the Faults of little Writers; and ſuch as carry their own Shame and Puniſhment along with them. But to let theſe Things paſs. I deſign not to make any formal Reply to my ſeveral Correſpondents: Truth will anſwer for itſelf, and, I am perſuaded, may be left to ſhift, having been once ſet competently clear, as I preſume, it has. Yet ſome few Things there are, capable of farther Illuſtration, and important enough to deſerve it; for the ſake of which, principally, I throw in this *Supplement*. And becauſe the Author of the *Defence of the Anſwer to the Remarks* ſeems to be the leading Man, I ſhall chuſe to continue the Debate directly with him, and by the way only with the reſt. I ſhall digeſt his Poſitions into ſo many Articles, and ſhall remark upon them, more or leſs, as I ſhall think there is Occaſion.

I.

The firſt and moſt important Article concerns the Nature and Obligation of Moral Virtue, upon which he thus clearly expreſſes his Sentiments: *Moral Virtue conſiſts in the Conformity of our Actions to the Relations, or Reaſons of Things; and therefore this muſt be obligatory to all intelligent Beings, even* previous *to any* Laws, *or Commands, or Injunctions,* divine *or human* *. He goes, we ſee, upon the *Independent* Bottom, and

* Defence of the Anſwer, &c. p. 8. comp. p. 6.

and ſets up a Syſtem of Morality without *God* at the Head of it. *Previous*, he ſays, to *any* Laws, any *divine* Laws, natural or revealed: This is his Principle. He ſuppoſes *Obligation* without *Law*, a *Religion* of Nature without a *Deity*, and *Duty* without a *Superior* to whom it is owing. One might think the very naming of theſe Things might be enough to confute them. Baron *Puffendorf* obſerved well of thoſe independent Schemiſts, in the Words here following, as they ſtand in the *Engliſh* Tranſlation "And truly, as for thoſe who would eſtabliſh "an eternal Rule for Morality of the Actions, "without reſpect to the *divine* Injunction and "Conſtitution, the Reſult of their Endeavours "ſeems to us to be, the joining with God Al-"mighty ſome coeval *extrinſical* Principle which "he is obliged to follow, in aſſigning the "Forms and Eſſences of Things †".

His Obſervation is very juſt: For if God be pre-ſuppoſed as aſſigning the Forms and Natures of Things, then whatever reſults from thoſe Forms, or Natures, or their Relations, muſt be referred up to God as the ſole Author and Deſigner of all; and then all practical Rules reſolve into the divine Injunction, ſince God muſt be ſuppoſed to *will* and *injoin* what himſelf has made neceſſary. But if Relations or Fitneſſes be made obligatory, independent of, and previous to *divine* Injunctions, there is nothing left to reſolve them into, but an *extrinſick* Principle.

 There

† *Puffendorff*'s Law of Nature and Nations. Lib. I. c. 2. p. 14.

There ſeems to have been the like Fallacy and Miſtake in this Affair, as in the famous Argument for the Exiſtence of a God, drawn, as they call it, *a priori*; which reſolves in like manner into a Principle *extrinſick*. For ſince a *Property* cannot be ſuppoſed *antecedent* to its *Subject*, nor the Subſtance *antecedent* to *itſelf*, there remains nothing but an *extrinſick* Principle tofound the Argument *a priori* upon. But this by the way only.

To return to the Matter in Hand: I ſay, if there was any *Deſign* at all in the Contrivance of Things, God muſt be ſet at the Head of all, and then all reſolves into his *Deſign*, *Will*, and *Injunction*: But if we once leave *God* out of the Scheme, there remains only *Chance*, or *Fate*, or I know not what other *extrinſick* Principle. The Proof of a Religion of Nature, depends intirely, as Biſhop *Parker* obſerves, upon the Suppoſition of an Author of Nature: For, ſays he, "Unleſs that be antecedently "granted, we cannot ſo much as proceed to "enquire after the Law of Nature. For if he "never contrived the Nature of Things, it is "evidently in vain to ſearch for his Deſign in "the Contrivance *". To which I take leave to add, that if God was the Author and Contriver of Nature, then his *Deſign*, *Will*, and *Injunction* muſt be conſidered as antecedent, and previous to every Thing. Biſhop *Parker* therefore, in the ſame Place, juſtly reprehends *Grotius* (if

* *Parker's* Demonſtration, &c. *Pref.* p. ix.

(if it was *Grotius*'s real and ſettled Opinion) for ſuppoſing the Rules of Morality *obligatory* without the Suppoſition of a Deity *. The moſt judicious of the Heathen Moraliſts look'd up to a *Deity* whereon to found their Morality, as may be ſeen in *Selden*, and in *Sharrock*: And the moſt judicious Moderns alſo, as *Cumberland*, *Puffendorf*, *Barbeyrac*, *Parker*, *Tyrrell*, and others have done the ſame. Dr. *Clarke* however plainly eſpouſed another Principle, in his *Evidences of natural and revealed Religion:* And Mr. *Clarke* of *Hull*, ſome time after, undertook to confute it; which, in my Judgment, he has effectually done, with all the Modeſty, Ingenuity, and Decency, as well as Strength of Reaſon, that becomes a knowing and a judicious Writer. Him therefore I before referred to †, to ſave myſelf the Trouble of doing the ſame Thing over again, and to leſs Advantage. However ſince the Author of *the Defence* thinks he has ſomething to ſay worth the anſwering, (tho' he pretends not to make any Reply to Mr. *Clarke*) I ſhall proceed a little farther into the Queſtion, and once more debate this controverted Point with him. I have ſaid enough in the general already, to ſatisfy, as I am perſwaded, reaſonable Men, who are uſed to an abſtract Way of Thinking: But for the ſake of common Readers, I ſhall be a little more particular, and riſque the being tedious, while I diſtinctly examine what *the Defence* has to plead for

* *Parker*'s Pref. p. viii. † Nature, Obligation, &c. p. 16.

for the *previous* Obligation upon *God*, and upon *Man*.

1. By his Account all *intelligent* Beings, God himſelf with the reſt, are *obliged* to the Practice of *Virtue*; tho' how either *Virtue*, or *Obligation* belongs to God, I underſtand not. We have often heard of his moral *Perfections*: But to talk of his moral *Virtues* is a kind of new Language. It comes very near to ſaying, (it is upon this Author's Principles, ſaying,) that it is his *Duty* to practiſe them. For thus he defines moral *Duties*: They are *ſuch Acts as we are obliged to exert in Conformity to the Reaſons of Things* *. Which Account of *Duties* is exactly the ſame with what he had given of *Virtues*; excepting that *Virtues* are Habits, and *Duties* Acts. Conſequently all intelligent Beings, God with the reſt, are *obliged* to exert thoſe *Acts*, in Conformity to the Reaſon of Things. That is to ſay, God himſelf is tied up to *Duty*, tho' he has no *Superior*, and it is not eaſy to ſay to whom he *owes* it.

Next as to *Obligation*, it ſeems to run croſs to all common Language, and common Reaſon too, to talk of God's being under *Obligation*, while he owns no *Superior*. The *Defence* might as well ſuppoſe a Cauſe prior to the firſt, as a Lawgiver higher than the Higheſt, or a Law without a Lawgiver, or Obligation without Law. The Sum of what he has to plead, is, that *where there was no Law, and yet God could not*

* Defence, p. 6.

not but act according to what was right, there was the higheſt Obligation poſſible *. He might as well ſay, that God is under an Obligation to *exiſt*, becauſe he *cannot but* exiſt. It is the Property and the Perfection of Almighty God to exiſt always, and always to act according to unerring *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs* infinite. I do not ſee what Warrant we have for ſpeaking of *God*, as if we were talking of *Creatures*, and for bringing him under *Duty* and *Obligation:* It is neither *Virtue*, nor *Duty* in him to exert Acts of *Goodneſs*, but it is his *Perfection.*

2. NEXT, from God, let us deſcend to his Creatures, who are indeed *obliged* both to *Virtue*, and *Duty*, by the *Law* of the moſt High, and by nothing elſe. Whatever ſome may pleaſe to fancy about abſtract *Fitneſſes*, if God be at the Head of them, He *obliges*, and not They: Or if you abſtract the Deity, you abſtract the Obligation. To follow them only as Rules of Convenience, when convenient, would not be *Duty*, or *Virtue*, but Craft, or Policy: And to follow them at all, when not convenient, would not be *Duty* or *Virtue*, but *Folly* and *Madneſs*. There is one very great Flaw in the Reaſonings of thoſe that go upon the independent Bottom, that they conſider only general abſtract *Fitneſſes*, without taking into Account the particular *Fitneſs* of the Agent who is ſuppoſed bound to obſerve them. They conſider only *what*

* Defence, &c. p. 13.

what is fit to be done, without inquiring *whether it be fit for* Caius, *or* Titius *to do it:* Which is a ſtrange Omiſſion in them. All that theſe general *Fitneſſes* mean, is, that they are good for Mankind, and that the Obſervance of them promotes the common Happineſs: And yet it is very certain that every Man may, muſt, and cannot but purſue his own Happineſs, and flee Miſery as ſuch. It is *fitting*, and *reaſonable*, and *juſt*, that a Man ſhould love and ſerve himſelf, *equally* at leaſt with others: And it is *unfitting*, *unreaſonable*, and *unjuſt* (were it practicable) for a Man to love his Neighbour *better* than himſelf. There is no *Wiſdom*, or *Virtue*, in being wiſe for others only, and not for one's ſelf alſo, firſt or laſt: Neither can any Man be obliged to it. Well then, let us imagine *Fitneſſes* to be the Rule to go by, and no *Deity* at the Head of them, to bind and inforce them *: It may be *fit* for a Man to obſerve them as far as is conſiſtent, or co-incident with his Temporal Happineſs: And that will be no *Virtue*, nor *Duty*, but Self-Intereſt only, and *Love* of the *World*. But if he proceeds farther to ſacrifice his own tem-

* Iſthæc porrò præcepta, etſi manifeſtam habeant *utilitatem*, tamen ut eadem *vim Legis* obtineant, neceſſum eſt præſupponi *Deum eſſe*, & ſua providentia omnia regere; eundemque Mortalium generi *injunxiſſe*, ut iſta rationis dictamina tanquam *Leges*, ab ipſo, vi congeniti Luminis promulgatas, obſervent. Aliàs enim poſſent ea quidem fortaſſe obſervari *intuitu utilitatis*, (ſicut quæ à medicis regendæ valetudini præſcribuntur) non autem tanquam *Leges*; quippè quæ neceſſario ponunt *ſuperiorem*, & quidem talem qui alteriùs gubernationem actu ſuſceperit.

Puffendorf. de Offic. Hom. &c. Lib. i. c. 3. p. 22.

temporal Happineſs to the *Public*, that indeed will be *Virtue* and *Duty* on the Suppoſition that *God* requires it, but without it, it is Folly and Madneſs. There is neither *Prudence*, nor *good Senſe*, and conſequently no *Virtue*, in preferring the Happineſs of others *abſolutely* to our own; that is to ſay, without Proſpect of a future *Equivalent*. But if God commands us to poſtpone our preſent Intereſt, Honour, or Pleaſure to publick Conſiderations, it is then *fitting* and *reaſonable* ſo to do; becauſe God by engaging us to it, becomes our *Security* that we ſhall not finally, or in the laſt Reſult, be *Loſers* by it. What would otherwiſe be *Folly*, now commences *Duty* and *Virtue*, and puts on *Obligation*. If God commands it, He *binds* us, He *obliges* us to it, by connecting our true and certain Happineſs with it. When we ſubmit to temporal Pains, Self-Denials, Reſtraints, Loſſes, Damages, *&c.* for the publick Good, this is *properly* Virtue: And yet this is not Virtue unleſs God *commands* it, becauſe That alone can make it, in our Circumſtances, *rational*, *fitting*, or *ſafe*, to do it. In *God* all Happineſs centers: Him we can *wiſely* follow and obey, becauſe in Him we have all, and he cannot deceive us. Here is a Foundation for *real* Virtue, which without him is barely *nominal*, or *notional* *, and indeed no Virtue,

* Without the *Divinity*, Duty, Obligation, Right, are, to ſpeak the Truth, but *fine Ideas* which may pleaſe the Mind, but will never touch the Heart; and which in themſelves conſidered, can

were it practicable. From theſe Principles it follows, that *Virtue* and *Religion* are but two Names for the ſame Thing: And Both of them reſolve into *Obedience to God* *: The Neceſſity of which, or Obligation thereto, reſolves into the Neceſſity we are under, as rational, and thinking Beings, to purſue our own moſt true, and laſting Happineſs.

How well this tallies with the Scripture Account of *Virtue*, is very evident. Our Lord himſelf has frequently obſerved, that all good Offices done to others, for temporal Ends only, have no *Virtue* in them. *To do Good to thoſe that* will *do Good to us*, and *to lend to thoſe of whom we hope to receive*, what is it but Traffick, and Merchandiſe? To *pray*, or to *give Alms*, and the like, only to be *heard* and *ſeen* of Men, what is it but to ſeek Honour of Men? There is no *Virtue* in theſe Things, however ſerviceable the outward Acts are to the World. *Heathens* and *Publicans* can do thus: It is *Pagan* Morality, which

can never lay us under an *indiſpenſable* Neceſſity of acting or not acting after a certain Manner. To give theſe *Ideas* all the Force they are capable of, to make them able to keep their Ground againſt the Paſſions, and private Intereſts, it is neceſſary there ſhould be a *ſuperior Being* more powerful than we are, which may compel us to conform our ſelves to them invariably in our Conduct, that may *bind* us ſo, that it may not be in our Power to diſengage our ſelves at Pleaſure; in a Word, that may lay us under an *Obligation* properly ſo called, to follow the Light of our own Reaſon. *Barbeyrac's* Spirit of Eccleſiaſt. p. 2, 3.

* Certainly, to *obey* the *Law* which the Author of his Being has given him, is *Religion:* And to obey the Law which he has given or revealed to him, by making it to reſult from the right Uſe of his natural Faculties, muſt be to him his *natural Religion.* And its trueſt Definition is, *The Purſuit of Happineſs* by the *Practice of Reaſon* and *Truth. Wollaſton's* Relig. of Nat. p. 52.

which perhaps rarely riſes higher. But *Virtue* is quite another Thing, looks beyond this World, and reſts in *God* alone. It is ſubmitting to preſent Reſtraints and Self-denials, and *truſting* in God only for our Recompence. Accordingly, all the bright Examples of *Virtue* recorded in ſacred Story, are repreſented as terminating in *Faith* and *Hope* towards God: See particularly, the eleventh Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, where this Doctrine is ſo plain, that nothing can be more ſo. I ſay then, that the *Love of God* is *Virtue*, and is *Duty*, and the Sum-total of Both. Any other pretended *Virtue* not centring in that, is either *unintelligible*, or *impracticable*. It is in vain then to talk of obligatory Fitneſſes, previous to divine Laws. The Fitneſs of every Action depends upon the right adjuſting of all Circumſtances, and particularly the Circumſtances which the *Agent* himſelf is under. It is *fit* for God alone, it is his peculiar Prerogative and Perfection, to adhere conſtantly to the Rules of *Truth* and *Goodneſs*, without *Obligation*, without *Law*. He is out of the Reach of Pain and Miſery; and his Happineſs can never interfere with the common Felicity. But *Creatures* may run Riſques (all Creatures, more or leſs) and want both to be *bound* by Law, and to be *ſecured* by the ſame, as often as their temporal Happineſs may interfere with the publick Intereſt. In ſuch Caſes, the Rules of Virtue would be no Rules to *Them*, becauſe not *reaſonable* in their Circumſtances, till God by annexing

nexing Happineſs and Miſery to the Obſervance and Non-obſervance of them, turns the Scale, and makes them *eligible*, fit to be practis'd in all Circumſtances whatever. Thus *Virtue* is rendered *obligatory* to all Creatures, and indeed is made *Virtue* to them (as I have before hinted) when it would be otherwiſe Folly and Diſtraction. Having, I preſume, thus competently fix'd our Principles, and ſet Morality upon its true Baſis, Objections to the contrary, being founded in falſe Principles, fall of Courſe. But ſtill, rather than be wanting in any Thing that may ſerve to clear up this important Point to the meaneſt Capacities, I ſhall conſider and anſwer the principal Objections, and then take leave of this Article.

1. It is objected, that *the Conſequence* of our Doctrine *is, that it was the arbitrary Will of God, whether even Vice, with all its Deformities, might not have been equally valued by Him, as Virtue is.** As wide a Conſequence as ever was drawn. Obligation ariſes not merely from *Command* (for every Command would not make it) but from the Command of ſo *great* and ſo *good* a Being, in whom all *Happineſs* is ſuppoſed to center. If he could command me to be *falſe*, he might himſelf be *falſe* alſo, and not be what he is; and then his Command would have no Weight in it, nor carry any Obligation with it, becauſe I could not *truſt* or *confide* in him. The

* Defence of the Anſwer, p. 12.

The juſt Conſequence from our Principles, is directly contrary to what this Writer pretends. For *Obligation* ſuppoſes, that God may infallibly be *truſted*; which ſuppoſes him to be infinitely *good* and *great*; which again ſuppoſes him not capable of doing, or commanding others to do any Thing contrary to the higheſt and moſt excellent End, the common Good of all intelligent Beings.

Beſides, we could not *prove* that there is any ſuch Thing as a *Law of Nature*, or *Religion of Nature*, if we did not know beforehand that there is a *God*, and that he is infinitely *wiſe* and *good*, and therefore muſt *will*, *command*, and *enjoin* what is for the common Felicity, and nothing but what is ſo. So that here again, the very Suppoſition we go upon, in aſſerting a *Law of Nature*, runs directly counter to what the Objection pretends.

2. It may be asked, whether, *if God had commanded Men to be unjuſt and ungrateful, it would have been morally good to be unjuſt, and ungrateful*?* To which I anſwer, that it is putting an abſurd, ſelf-contradictory Suppoſition; for it is ſuppoſing a God that is not neceſſarily wiſe and good, a God and no God. But to come cloſer to the Queſtion: Abſtract from the Conſideration of *divine Law*, and then conſider, what *Juſtice* and *Gratitude* would amount to. To be *juſt* and *grateful* ſo far as is conſiſtent, or coincident with our temporal Intereſt, Pleaſure,

* See Defence, p. 12.

Pleaſure, or Convenience, and no farther, has no more *moral* Good in it, than the paying a Debt for our preſent Eaſe, or in order to be *truſted* again: And the being further *juſt* and *grateful*, without future Proſpects, or to be finally Loſers by it, has as much of *moral Virtue* in it, as *Folly* and *Indiſcretion* has: So that, the *Deity* once ſet aſide, it is Demonſtration, there could be no *Morality* at all. But admitting a *Deity*, and his *Laws*, then Morality immediately revives, and has ſomething to ſubſiſt upon, though at the ſame Time God muſt be ſuppoſed to be *God*.

To conclude this Article, I ſhall take the Freedom to borrow the Words of an ingenious Gentleman, who about four Years ago, thus expreſſed his Sentiments on this Head.

" Take in *The Divinity* into your Syſtem of " Morality, and if it be regular alſo in other " Reſpects, it is like a compleat human Body, " beautifully formed, and aptly diſpoſed for ex- " erting all the Offices and Acts that a living " Body is capable of. Abſtract *the Divinity* " from your Schemes; ſuppoſe they have no " Concern at all with, nor Reference to *God* " and his *Will*, and your Morality will be like " a Body without a Head, from whence the " Spirits are derived, the Principle of Motion " and Action to all the other Members, other- " wiſe uſeleſs and inanimate.* "

B, It

* A Letter to a young Gentleman at the Temple, p. 10.

3. It may perhaps be objected, that this Way of reſolving Virtue makes it look like a mean and *mercenary* Thing, becauſe it is ſuppoſed to ſtand only upon a View to one's own *Happineſs*, when it ought rather to be intirely *diſintereſted*, and above all ſelfiſh Views. To which I anſwer, that this Way of reſolving Virtue is juſt, and rational: For what more rational than to purſue our greateſt Happineſs? Or what more irrational than to neglect it, or to prize any thing above it? Let ſome declaim as they pleaſe upon *diſintereſted* Benevolence, we maintain, that it is ſufficiently diſintereſted, if it contemns all narrow, low, or ſordid Views, and looks only at ſecuring an eternal Intereſt in God. What other Foundation of Virtue can any Man lay, which is not plainly fanciful, and chimerical? They may ſay, they *follow Virtue*, for *Virtue's ſake:* As if Virtue were the *End*, when it is evidently but the *Means*; and *Happineſs* is the *End* it leads to, Happineſs either of our ſelves, or others. Let them ſay next, that they follow it as a *Means* to make *other* Men happy. What? Without any Self-Regards? How is it poſſible? Or ſuppoſing it poſſible, how can it be *reaſonable*, or *right*, or indeed *Virtue*, to prefer the Happineſs of others *abſolutely* to our own? Let them pretend next, that they follow Virtue, becauſe they take *Delight* in it, as in *Beauty*, *Order*, *Symmetry*, &c. Be it ſo: Then it is indulging a *Paſſion*, and purſuing a kind of *pleaſing Senſation*, and ſo is acting upon no higher a Principle than

Love

Love of preſent Pleaſure; which perhaps, after all, reſolves only into the Delight we take in doing Things which tend to procure the *Love*, *Eſteem*, *Honour*, and *Applauſe* of Men. Whatever it be, it is ſomething vaſtly inferior to taking *Delight* in God, and is neither ſo *honourable* a Principle to found Virtue upon (were it really *Virtue*) nor at all *ſufficient* to ſupport it in trying Circumſtances. For if the ſuppoſed Pleaſurableneſs of Virtue comes to be over-ballanced with Pains (as it eaſily may, when *divine* Comforts are ſet aſide) then Virtue may become loathſome, and grievous, and no Man will follow it. Upon the whole then, there is no firm Foundation of *Virtue*, but the Love of God, and Reliance upon Him. All other pretended Props or Supports, are *low*, and *mean* in Compariſon: And after all the fine Talk which ſome of a lively Imagination may pleaſe to make uſe of, there are but *two* Principles for Men to proceed upon; namely, either the *Love of this World*, or the *Love of God*. And now let any reaſonable Man judge which is the moſt *mercenary* Principle of the two; which the likelieſt to found true and ſolid *Virtue* upon.

I MEET with no other Objections, but what are the ſame with thoſe now mentioned, or ſo nearly the ſame, that the ſame Anſwers may ſerve for all. So I have nothing further to add, but the Inference, or Corollary, in Favour of *poſitive* Duties, as before.

If God's *Command* in moral Duties, conſtitutes *Virtue* and *Duty*, then of conſequence, God's Command in Matters of a *poſitive* Nature, conſtitutes *Duty* and *Virtue* alſo: And therefore our Obedience, in either Caſe, reſolves into the ſame Principle, and has the ſame common Ground of Obligation. God's Reaſons for commanding may be different; but our Reaſons for obeying are the ſame. *Reaſons* of a *Law* are one Thing, Reaſons of *Obligation* are another. A Law ſhould not want its *Reaſons*; but yet it is the *Law*, and not thoſe *Reaſons*, that properly creates the Obligation: For the Law would *oblige*, tho' we knew nothing of the Reaſons on which it is founded. *Poſitive* Duties, therefore, and *moral*, are alike obligatory, as enjoin'd by the ſame Authority, and inforced by the ſame Sanctions. Both proceed from the ſame infinite *Goodneſs*, and Both lead to the ſame infinite *Happineſs*: Which is ſufficient to infer *equal* Obligation, where other Circumſtances are equal. *Moral* Duties ariſe from the *Will*, or *Command* of God, founded on the known *ſtanding* Reaſons of Things: *Poſitive* Duties ariſe from the *Will*, or *Command* of God, founded upon *occaſional* Reaſons, known perhaps to God alone. In *moral Laws*, we ſee the *Reaſons* firſt, and by them we come at the Knowledge of the *Law*; which Method of Inveſtigation has probably occaſion'd the Miſtake of ſuppoſing the Reaſons *obligatory* antecedently to the *Law*, tho' they are Proofs only that there is

and muſt be a *Law* ſuitable: In *poſitive Laws*, we know the Laws themſelves firſt, and afterwards the *Reaſons*, ſo far as we at all know them; and ſo no Body here ſuſpects any thing of an *Obligation* prior to the Laws.

So much for this firſt and moſt important Article: The reſt may be diſpatch'd in fewer Words.

II.

The *Defence* pretends, that Poſitive Duties ariſe from *the mere Will of the Preſcriber* *. To obviate which, I before obſerved, "That they "are always founded upon *Reaſons*, known "perhaps in part to us, but perfectly known "to God, and ſo are ultimately reſolvable into "infinite *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*. †" I do not find that the *Defence* advances any thing againſt what I ſaid, excepting only confident Affirmations. There is another Gentleman who enters a little farther into the Queſtion ‖, who yet is forced to allow, that *Poſitive* Commands are founded in *good and wiſe Reaſons*, becauſe infinite Wiſdom does every Thing *wiſely*. But he asks, whether they be founded on *ſuch Reaſons* as *moral Duties are founded upon?* Such undoubtedly in the main, *wiſe* and *excellent* Reaſons, and Reaſons of *common* Good. For as God has preſcribed *moral* Duties, becauſe he

* Defence, *&c.* p. 6, 7, 8, 14, 42.

† Nature and Obligation, p. 12.

‖ The comparative Excellence and Obligation of moral and poſitive Duties fully ſtated and conſidered, p. 23, 24.

he loves Mankind, ſo he has alſo preſcribed *poſitive* Duties for the ſame Reaſon. But are they *natural*, *neceſſary*, *eternal*, *indiſpenſable*, *reſulting from the Nature of Things?* No, for then the Precepts enjoining them, would not be *poſitive*, but *moral*. But notwithſtanding, it is a *natural*, *neceſſary*, *eternal*, *indiſpenſable* Rule of Morality, to *obey* God even in Matters of a *poſitive* Nature, while the Law continues in Force, and is not repealed by the ſame Authority that gave it. *God*'s Liberty in this Caſe is greater, *ours* is not: He may change the *Law*, we cannot ſwerve from our *Obedience* without his Leave. It is allowed that poſitive Precepts are *occaſional*, not *conſtant*, are particular to *Times*, *Places*, or *Perſons*, and not ſo *univerſal* as the other. But ſtill there may be as great Neceſſity for thoſe *occaſional* Precepts upon *Occaſion*, as for the more *conſtant* ones *conſtantly*. There may alſo be as much Wiſdom and Goodneſs ſhewn in adapting them to mutable Circumſtances, as in ſuiting the other to the permanent Syſtem of Things: And their Ends and Uſes may be as *high* and *heavenly*, and looking as far forwards as the Ends and Uſes of moral Commandments. On all which Accounts the paying a conſcientious Regard to poſitive Precepts, for the Time being, may be of as great Importance, and as ſtrictly required, as any other Obedience. But we ſhall have more of this Matter under other Articles.

III.

The *Defence* aſſerts, that *poſitive Duty muſt give way to moral, whenever they interfere**. This is the Doctrine which I diſliked in the *Catechiſm*, and which I have confuted at large in my former Papers. The ſetting up of Duty againſt Duty, and giving the Preference abſolutely to one above the other, is *injurious to Both*.

The Reaſon which he gives for preferring *moral* Duties abſolutely to *poſitive*, is becauſe the former are *unchangeable* and the latter *changeable*; which is not ſtrictly true, not true of *all* moral Duties: For many of them will ceaſe, like as poſitive Duties, when there ſhall be no longer Occaſion for them. The Duties I mean, of Mercy to the afflicted, poor, and miſerable, which obtain only in this World, and are among the *weighty* Matters of the Law while there is Need of them. The Truth is, *moral* Performances, of ſuch a Kind, have their Times and Seaſons, as well as the other, are moſt of them limited to the preſent Syſtem of Things, and expire with it. It is equally true both of moral and poſitive Duties, that they continue as long as there is Occaſion for them, and no longer, and then will be ſucceeded by other Duties, moral or poſitive, ſuch as a new Scene of Things requires, and ſuch as will then be inſiſted upon as new Ways of expreſſing and exerciſing that *Love*

* Defence, p. 8, 9.

Love of God, which is the Foundation of all, and which is unrepealable, abiding for ever. While the *Occaſion* or Neceſſity remains for any particular Duty, any Branch of that *Love*, be it in a poſitive Inſtance or moral, the Importance of that Duty ſo long remains. Length of Time makes no Difference as to the Weight or Force of an Obligation. We are not at all the leſs bound to obey what is enjoined us at this Juncture, becauſe it will not be enjoined a Hundred, or a Thouſand Years hence. While the poſitive Law is in Force, Obedience is indiſpenſably neceſſary: And nothing can remove it but the ſame Authority that gave it.

THERE are ſome Inſtances in Scripture of ritual Laws giving way to *Neceſſity*, being underſtood to contain *tacite* Exceptions for preſerving Life. Upon that Principle, *David* was allowed to eat of the *Shew-bread* *, contrary to the ordinary Rules. And the Jews ſcrupled not to abate of their Rigours as to keeping the *Sabbath*, in Caſes of great Neceſſity †: Tho' at the ſame Time no Neceſſity whatever would make them ſubmit to the *eating of Swine's Fleſh* ||, when they thought, no tacite Exception was to be underſtood. *Neceſſity* very often alters the *Caſe*, both as to moral and poſitive Precepts: Not that it properly juſtifies the *violating* of either, but the Laws being ſuppoſed to admit of ſome tacite Exceptions

* 1 Sam. xxi. 6. Matt. xii. 3, 4.
† 1 Maccab. ii. 41. Luk. xiii. 15. xiv. 5.
‖ 2 Maccab. vi. 18, 19, 20.

ceptions in favour of Neceſſity, they are not *violated* when not obſerved in Caſes which they did not reach to. Allowing only for ſuch Caſes of Neceſſity (to which both moral and poſitive Precepts ſometimes yield) a poſitive Law, while unrepeal'd, binds as much as a moral one: And God himſelf can no more make wilful Diſobedience in poſitive Inſtances (the Law continuing) to be innocent, than he can make Injuſtice or Ingratitude, or any other Immorality, to be no Immorality. The diſobeying a poſitive Precept is immoral, as well as the diſobeying a moral one: And all the Difference is, that one continues perhaps longer than the other, not that it is more obligatory, while both are ſtanding, than the other.

Suppose that *Abraham*, when commanded to go and ſacrifice up his Son, had put it off, ſome Months, or Days, to diſcharge good moral Offices to the Sick, Needy, or Afflicted; would that have been juſtifiable Conduct? I ſuppoſe not: Becauſe there is a Time for all Things; and at that particular Seaſon, the *poſitive* Precept was to take place above the *moral* ones, which might have Juſtice done to them at another Time.

Suppose again, that at the three Seaſons of the Year, when all the Males were to go up to *Jeruſalem*, to appear before the Lord, they had loitered and ſtay'd behind for ſome Reaſons of *Charity*, or *Humanity:* Would ſuch Behaviour have been commendable? Far from it.

The

The *poſitive* Duty was limited to a certain Time, the particular Exerciſe of the moral ones was not: And therefore it was proper at that Seaſon, for the moral affirmative Precepts to give way to poſitive. It would have been vain for them to have pleaded in ſuch a Caſe; that poſitive Duties are *Means* only to moral, and that they intended to be good *moral* Men at Home, and ſo to anſwer the *End* deſign'd. God will not be mocked at that Rate: But when he commands Men to obey, tho' in *poſitive* Inſtances, diſobeying him is Rebellion, and heinous Iniquity. The Queſtion therefore about the *Preference*, depends not upon the *moral*, or *poſitive* Nature of the Precepts, as I have often ſaid, but upon the Time, and other Circumſtances. Thus far in anſwer to the Author of the *Defence*.

THERE is another Gentleman, who ſpends, I think, about forty, or more, tedious Pages, to aſſert the ſuperior Excellence and Obligation of moral Duties*. The firſt nine or ten Pages he fills with Things moſtly foreign, or with falſe Repreſentations of my Principles, as his Manner is. He repreſents my Notion as differing from Biſhop *Cumberland*'s †, tho' it is exactly the ſame with it. He intimates more than once, if I underſtand him, that the Rule I go by, is to conſider what will beſt ſerve a *preſent Turn*, or *particular Exigency* ‖: Whereas my conſtant Rule is, to conſider in any particular Caſe, what will be

* The Comparative Excellence, *&c.* p. 40, *&c.*
† *Ibid.* p. 44.
‖ *Ibid.* p. 44, 59.

be beſt [*upon the whole*, ſo as never to croſs upon the greateſt and higheſt End, the *common* Felicity. A Rule ſo innocent, and of ſuch admirable Uſe in all Caſes of Intricacy, that nothing can be more ſo.

He miſrepreſents me further*, as if I had reſolved the Iniquity, or Sin of neglecting the holy Communion, into the *Offence* only, the ill *Example* ſet, and the Occaſion thereby given to *unjuſt* and *ill-natured* Cenſures. Whereas I affirm *frequent* or *total* Neglects to be " neglecting to renew our Covenant and In-" tercourſe with God, neglecting to repent and " to reſolve well, neglecting to repair the ſpiri-" tual Life, diſpoſing the Mind to Irreligion " and Immorality, and in Proceſs of Time, to " incurable Profaneneſs †".

I obſerv'd beſides, that the *Example* of ſuch Irreverence towards God, would do infinitely more Harm to the World, than any pretended *moral* Services can attone for, or compenſate ‖: A Truth, which no ſerious Perſon can doubt of. And I particularly made mention of it, to obviate the vain Pretence, that a Man may be doing *Good to the World*, by friendly and charitable Offices, while he *totally* neglects his *religious* Duties. I ſay, that *upon the whole*, he does not ſerve Mankind in ſuch Caſes, but does

more

J

* Comparative Excellence, *&c.* p. 46, 47, 48.
† See Nature and Obligation, p. 76.
‖ *Ibid.* p. 26, 76.

more Harm than Good: Becauſe the Miſchief done to Religion in general by ſuch Examples, will do Mankind more hurt than the Services of any ſingle Man, or many, can make amends for.

I MUST here take notice of a very odd Argument which this Gentleman produces * for the juſtifying a *total* Neglect of the holy Communion. If it be lawful to neglect it *ſometimes*, for Reaſons of neceſſary Charity, he argues, that it may be lawful alſo to neglect it *often*, or *always*, upon the ſame Principle, if the like Occaſions happen: For, ſays he, *How can the Number make that criminal when repeated, that was innocent and right in the ſingle Act?* To which I anſwer, *firſt*, that there is a Time for all Things, and there is no Senſe in ſuppoſing that Occaſions of *neceſſary* Charity can recur ſo often, as to require either a *conſtant*, or a *frequent* Neglect of the divine Ordinances in the ſame Man. I anſwer, *2dly*, that it would be great *Vanity* in any Man to pretend, that his Services are equivalent to God's Honour, or are ſo neceſſary to Mankind that he can *never*, or very *rarely* be ſpared to attend upon God. I anſwer, *thirdly*, that there is no Man but what takes every Day or Night more Time for his ordinary Meals, his Recreations, or his Sleep, than it would require once a Week, to ſpend in partaking of the *Communion*. And if *moral* Duties may yield to ſuch *daily* Avocations, ſurely, they may much more yield to *Weekly*, or

* Comparative Excellence, &c. p. 46, 47.

Monthly Calls to the Sacrament. I anſwer, 4*thly*, that this Gentleman's General Rule, that *Number* and *Repetition* do not make an Act criminal, is a very falſe one, and contrary to the common Rules of *moral* Arithmetick. It is the *repeating* the ſame Act of drinking, that makes the *Drunkard*; and the *Number* of the Morſels makes the *Glutton:* Or, to uſe a fitter Compariſon, it is the over-great *Frequency* of Faſting that famiſhes the Body; and, in like manner, too *frequent* abſtaining from the holy Communion, famiſhes the Soul. No Charity to Mens Bodies, or Souls either, will juſtify a Man's neglecting the Concerns of his own Soul. God gives us Leave to neglect his Ordinances *ſometimes*, but within Compaſs, and within Meaſure, ſo that neither *Religion* in general, nor a Man's own *ſpiritual* Improvement ſuffer by it. But if inſtead of a *Pound* permitted, we preſume to take *twenty*, or inſtead of a *Shekel* allowed us, we take a Talent, though it be only repeating the ſame Act, taking Pound after Pound, and Shekel after Shekel, yet all beyond what is proper, and permitted, is Wrong and Robbery, and the *Exceſs* is criminal, tho' there be no Iniquity in the *ſingle* Act.

Hitherto I have been attending this Gentleman through ten of his Pages, as far as to Page 50. where he at length begins to talk directly to the main Point, the *Preference* of moral to poſitive Duties. And now I muſt give

give the Readers a Taſte of his Reſonings upon that Head.

1. One of his Arguments is, that moral Duties exceed poſitive, *as much as Practice improves and ſtrengthens beyond Contemplation* *: As if *Acts* of poſitive Duty were *Contemplation* only.

2. Another is, that *it is peculiar to moral Duty, which poſitive has no Share in, that it make us rich towards God, rich in good Works* †. As if *Abraham*'s Obedience in two ſignal poſitive Inſtances, by which he was juſtified, and for which he was called the *Friend of God*‖, did not amount to *good Works*, nor made him *rich towards God*. Or as if preaching the Goſpel, and keeping the Faith were not good Works, intituling to a *Crown* of *Righteouſneſs**.

3. A third Argument, or the firſt over again, is that *moral* Duties are *active Virtue* †: As if *poſitive* Duties were not altogether as *active*.

4. A fourth, or the ſame over again, is that *in moral Duties we ſtep farther towards Heaven; in poſitive we ſit down to conſider, and refreſh ourſelves for the Journey*‖. So *Abraham*, we are to ſuppoſe, ſat down to *conſider*, and *refreſh*, when he came out of his own Country

* Comparative Excellence, &c. p. 50.
† Ibid. p. 50. ‖ James ii. 21, 22, 23.
* 2 Tim. iv. 7.
† Comparative Excellence, &c. p. 51. ‖ Ibid. p. 51.

in Obedience to a *poſitive* Commandment, and went three Days Journey to offer up his only Son; and made no *Step* towards Heaven in thoſe Inſtances, tho' thereby *juſtified*, and advanced to the cloſeſt *Friendſhip* with *God*.

5. A FIFTH is, that moral Duties only are *founded in the Reaſons and Fitneſſes of Things* *. As if infinite Wiſdom could command any Thing that had not its proper *Fitneſs* to anſwer the Ends deſign'd: Or as if it were not eternally, and unalterably *fitting*, that God ſhould be obeyed in every Thing.

I PASS over this Gentleman's crude Account of the Reaſon of the Difference between *affirmative* and *negative* Precepts †, that one ſhould bind always, and the other not ſo. He might have ſaid all in a very few Words: That we cannot be always employed in all affirmative Duties, becauſe they are *many*, and we can do but one Thing at a Time: But we can always *forbear* the doing what God has *forbidden*. One Sort therefore admits of Intermiſſions in acting, the other admits of none in the forbearing to act.

THE Reader, I preſume, by this Time, has enough for a Specimen, and I ſhall truſt him with the reſt. To purſue ſuch a Writer through all his Wandrings and Miſtakes, would take up too much of my Time and Paper, and make Trifles look conſiderable. I return to the Author of the *Defence*.

IV. THE

* Comparative Excelleence, &c. p. 52.
† Ibid. p. 53, 54, 55, &c.

IV.

The *Defence* obſerves, that Obedience to *poſitive* Precepts can in no Caſe be *greater* Virtue than Obedience to *moral*; *becauſe it cannot be greater Virtue than exact Conformity to the Reaſons of Things.** I would only ask here, whether ſome Inſtances of Obedience to *moral* Precepts may not be *greater Virtue* than other Inſtances of Obedience to moral Precepts: Or whether there be no *Degrees* in Virtue. The Argument ſeems to me to ſtrike at all Degrees in Virtue, and ſo to prove nothing becauſe it proves too much, and terminates in Abſurdity. I think, the proper Diſtinction here is, that all Acts of Virtue are *truly* Virtue, one *as well* as the other, but not in the *ſame Degree* with the other. Common Logick will tell us, that tho' Subſtance admits not of *magis* and *minus*, yet there is *major* and *minor Subſtantia*. I do not underſtand how this Writer can ſay, that there *cannot be greater Virtue than Virtue*, unleſs in ſuch a Senſe as there *cannot be greater Subſtance than Subſtance*, tho' it is certain that one Subſtance may be greater than another.

The Truth is, and it is all that he ſhould ſay, there may be *greater* and *ſmaller* Virtues, and there may be more of Virtue in one than in the other: But yet the ſmaller Virtue is *Virtue* no leſs than the other; as a little Diamond

*Defence, p. 16.

mond is not leſs a Diamond than the greateſt, tho' it be a leſs Diamond. The Argument ſeems to be nothing but a confuſed Tranſition made from one Way of Expreſſion to the other, not obſerving the proper Diſtinction. And ſince I have taken this notice of it, it needs no farther Anſwer. It is manifeſt that there are *Degrees* in Virtue: And as Obedience to poſitive Precepts is undoubtedly *Virtue*, ſo it may happen in certain Caſes, as particularly in *Abraham*'s, to be *greater* Virtue, tho' not *more truly* Virtue than any other.

V.

The *Defence* finds fault with us for aſſerting that Obedience to God in *poſitive* Inſtances, is really *moral*. He judges it to be acting in Conformity to *poſitive* Law only, not to *moral**. I muſt take leave ſtill to affirm, that obeying God in *poſitive* Inſtances is *moral* Obedience, conform to *moral* Law, which preſcribes that the *Creature* ſhall obey the *Creator*. The very *Nature* and *Reaſon* of the Thing, the *Relation* and natural *Fitneſs* requires it †. And if it be *moral*

* Defence, p. 16, 17.

† The Words of Dr. *Clagett*, or Dr. *Stebbing*, are ſo appoſite to our preſent Purpoſe, that I ſhall here tranſcribe them.

" Tho' the Diſtinction between *moral* and *poſitive* may be " allowed with reſpect to *Laws*, yet this does not ſeem to afford " any Foundation for a proportionable Diſtinction with reſpect " to the *Actions* of Men converſant about thoſe Laws. That is, " tho' you may abſolutely confine the Notion of a *moral Law* to " ſuch Laws as are of natural and perpetual Obligation, you " cannot abſolutely confine the Notion of a *moral Man* to him " who

ral Duty (as I ſuppoſe it is) for a Servant to obey his Maſter in Things *indifferent*, and for a *Subject* to obey his *Prince*, and for a *Son* to obey his *Parents*, and for a *Soldier* to obey his commanding Officer, how comes it to paſs that it ſhould not be *moral* Duty for *Men* to obey *God* in Things of a *poſitive* Nature? The Author of the *Defence* underſtands not, how it is *properly Virtue*. But it is very obvious to perceive, that ſincere Obedience to *divine* Laws is always *Virtue*, and ſo *properly*, that nothing elſe properly is *Virtue*. However, upon his own Principles, this muſt be *Virtue*, becauſe it is eternally *fit*, *reaſonable*, and *right*, that God ſhould be obeyed even in *poſitive* Inſtances, ſo long as the Commands ſubſiſt: The *Reaſon* of Things, and the *common Good* demand it.

VI.

The *Defence* aſſerts that *poſitive Duty is enjoin'd only as a Means to moral Virtue*[*]. But if it be *moral Virtue* to obey God in *poſitive* Inſtances, as I have proved, then it is more than *Means* to Virtue, and therefore not Means *only*. He

" who obeys ſuch Laws only. The Reaſon is plain, *viz.* that " upon Suppoſition the *poſitive* Laws are enjoin'd, Obedience to " ſuch Laws becomes a *Part of Morality*, as reſulting from that " general and univerſal Principle of Morality which has juſt now " been mention'd; to wit, that *God is to be obeyed in every Thing* " *which he commands*. He therefore who refuſes to obey even a " *poſitive* Law, is no *moral* Man."

Stebbing's Abridgm. of Clag. p. 63. Fol. edit.

[*] Defence, p. 18.

He allows it may be called *virtuous Means*; which is ſo near the ſaying what I ſay of it, that it ſeems to be only a kind of Frowardneſs, that he ſcruples to call it directly *Virtue*, as I do.

VII.

The *Defence* has another Singularity, that Obedience to poſitive Commands, *is not ſo properly Virtue, as a Declaration, or Teſtimony, or Proof of Virtue* *. This is but a forced Pretence, or Subterfuge, which will not anſwer the Purpoſe. Strange, that the very *Life* and *Spirit* of Virtue, which according to St. *James* †, lies in the *Activity*, ſhould be no more than a *Proof* of it. At this Rate, all Acts and Inſtances of Virtue, in moral as well as poſitive Duties, will be *Proofs* only of Virtue, not Virtue. Moral Performances will all be *Proofs* only of the inward *Habits* of Virtue; which is what the Objection, I ſuppoſe, amounts to. Accordingly *Almſgiving* will be no Virtue, but a Proof of Liberality: And ſo the *Defence* itſelf ſays expreſsly, that *feeding the Hungry is only an Act by which I teſtify that I have Virtue, but 'tis not Virtue itſelf* ‖.

The ſame will be equally true of all *good Works:* From whence it will follow, that we are to be rewarded, not for our *Virtues*, but for our *Proofs* and *Declarations*. The like alſo, muſt

* Defence, p. 20. † James ii. 26.
‖ Defence, p. 20.

muſt, by Parity or Reaſon, be ſaid of *Vices*: And ſo it ſhould be obſerved of Acts of *Lewdneſs* and *Drunkenneſs*, that they are not *Vices*, but *Declarations*, *Teſtimonies*, and *Proofs*, that Men are much addicted to Incontinence, and Intemperance. If any Man affects ſuch a Way of talking, I would not thwart or diſturb him in it. It is enough for me, that the Objection over-ſhoots the Mark, and is as forcible againſt *moral*, as againſt *poſitive* Duties. Let but Obedience in *poſitive* Inſtances, be as truly Virtue as Obedience in *moral*, and I ask no more; neither am I concern'd to diſpute with thoſe that deny it of *Both*.

However, I cannot but obſerve with ſome Satisfaction, that this Writer does not long continue contradicting me in this Article, but comes entirely into my Sentiments in another Place, unawares. He asks, *What is the Difference between Continuance in well-doing, and Virtue? Betwixt good Works, and moral Goodneſs*?* Intimating, that there is no Difference at all. *Well-doing* therefore, is more than *proving*; and *good Works* more than *Proofs*. They are *Virtue*, and *moral Goodneſs*, by his own Confeſſion: So hard is it for a Man not to forget himſelf ſometimes, when he is labouring to overthrow the Truth. To conclude this Point, I can eaſily prove that obeying God in *poſitive* Inſtances, is *well-doing*, and that ſuch Performances (as in *Abraham* for inſtance) are *good Works*. Therefore, &c.

* Defence, p. 25.

VIII.

The *Defence* pretends, *That the Breach of a poſitive Law, when it is no Breach of a moral Law, may be valued at a certain Price here, and the Man that ſuffers the Penalty of it, may be in Danger of nothing future.** This I take to be *new* Doctrine, and of pernicious Tendency. I have ſeen ſomething of it before, in a late Writer;‖ who propoſes it, however, very modeſtly, in the Way of Conjecture, as a Matter that may require ſecond Thoughts; as indeed it does. The Doctrine, I think, amounts to this; either that it is *no Sin* to violate poſitive Inſtitutions, or that it is *venial*, tho' ever ſo *wilful*. I am afraid, this will be bringing in again the Popiſh Doctrine of *mortal* and *venial* Sins, at a Back-Door. For, to uſe this Gentleman's Phraſe, upon another Occaſion, *One Egg is not liker to another*, than this Doctrine, of ſome Sins being ſo ſlight as to deſerve only *temporal Puniſhment*, is to the *Romiſh* Doctrine of *venial* Sins. This is the ſecond Time I have obſerved Him running (unawares) into *popiſh* Tenets, or very nearly ſuch. The firſt was, in his aſſerting the abſolute *Perfection of good Works*, which I before took Notice of:† And now this next is, his maintaining the Doctrine of *venial* Sins; for ſuch it plainly is. Againſt all ſuch Pretences, I may

* Defence, p. 31.
‖ *Colliber* on Natural and Reveal'd Religion, p. 151, *&c.*
† See Nature and Obligation, *&c.* p. 57.

may here take Leave to uſe the Words of Biſhop *Burnet:* § " The Scripture no where teaches us " to think ſo ſlightly of the *Majeſty* of *God*, or " of his *Law.* There is a Curſe upon every one " *that continueth not in all Things which are* " *written in that Book of the Law to do them.* * " And the ſame Curſe muſt have been on us all, " if Chriſt had not redeemed us from it: *The* " *Wages of Sin is Death.* And St. *James* aſ- " ſerts, that there is ſuch a Complication of all " the Precepts of the Law of God, both with " one another, and with the Authority of the " Lawgiver, that *he who offends in one Point, is* " *guilty of all.* † So ſince God has in his Word " given us ſuch dreadful Apprehenſions of his " *Wrath*, and of the *Guilt of Sin*, we dare not " ſoften theſe to a Degree below the Majeſty of " the eternal God, and the Dignity of his moſt " holy Laws." Thus far he. And I preſume, the ſettled ſtanding Doctrine of all ſober and *proteſtant* Divines is, that the *wilful* violating the divine Law, even in a *ſmall* Matter, is no ſmall Thing. Sins of *Ignorance* and *Infirmity* are the only ſlight Sins: All *wilful* Sins are deadly, and damning. The Rule then is, to make the Eſtimate not barely by the *Matter* of the Offence (for then *Adam*'s Offence would have been a ſlight Thing) but by the Streſs that God has laid upon his Commandments, and the Degree of *Wilfulneſs* that goes along with the Tranſgreſſion

§ *Burnet*'s Articl. XVI. p. 140.
* Gal. iii. 10.
† James ii. 10, 11.

of them. This is old and true Doctrine. But let the ſerious and devout Chriſtian obſerve and conſider, what theſe *novel* Notions about *poſitive* Duties are like to end in: Namely, in this; that it is *no Sin* to offend againſt them, or none that affects the *Conſcience*. Nevertheleſs, I am perſuaded, that the ſame Perſons who ſpeak thus ſlightly of obeying God in Matters *poſitive*, will look upon it as a grievous Sin for *Servants*, *Children*, and *Subjects*, to diſobey their *Maſters*, *Parents*, *Governors*, in any lawful or indifferent Commands. Or if they will not allow that, what will then this Contempt of *poſitive* Duties at length bring us to?

IX.

Another Particularity of the *Defence* is, that outward hypocritical Performances in *moral* Duties cannot juſtly be called *moral* Performances; for this wiſe Reaſon, becauſe they are *immoral*.* And then he goes on, pleaſantly, to talk againſt *playing* upon the Word *moral*, at the very Inſtant that he is doing it. For what does his Argument here amount to, but *playing* upon a Word? The divine Precepts are diſtinguiſh'd into *moral* and *not-moral*, and not into *moral* and *immoral*. So that *moral* in the Phraſe, *moral Performances*, is not oppoſed to *immoral*, but to *poſitive*, or *not moral*. Actions therefore or Performances may in this Senſe be *moral*, on account of their *Matter*

* Defence, p. 41.

ter (which is *moral*, not *poſitive*) and be *immoral* too, on account of their *Obliquity*. Did he never hear of *moral Evil?* For, ſtrange as it may ſeem, it is moſt certainly true, that *moral* Evil is a Thing *immoral*.

X.

The *Defence* denies, or at leaſt ſcruples to own, that *any ſupernatural ſanctifying Graces go along with the worthy Reception of the holy Communion*.* I will not here be at the Pains to prove (for the Satisfaction only of an humourous Gentleman, who may read if he pleaſes) the known and approved Doctrines of our Church, and of all Chriſtian Churches. I referr'd him before to *Voſſius*, and now refer him thither again, and to *Gerhard*, and *Hooker*, to ſay nothing of many more, who have proved the Thing to our Hands. It is ſufficient now to take Notice, that Dr. *Clarke* himſelf owns the Doctrine, in his Poſthumous *Sermons*, tho' he had omitted it in his *Catechiſm*. He owns that ſuch Graces, *through the Aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God, are annex'd to the Ordinance partaken of by truly devout and well-diſpoſed Minds*.§ At length then it appears, that the Doctor has *talk'd enthuſiaſtically*,‖ juſt as I would have had him do: So that the beſt Apology for

* Defence, p. 53.
§ *Clarke's* Poſth. Serm. Vol. IV. p. 131, 186, 187.
‖ See the *Anſwer to the Remarks*, p. 76.

for Dr. *Clarke* would have been, to ſay, that he had *omitted* the Doctrine accidentally, and not *denied* it; which now appears to be Fact. But his Apologiſt was too well pleaſed with the *Omiſſion*; and judging of the Doctor by himſelf, thought he had left it out as *enthuſiaſtical*; tho' it is the plain certain Doctrine of all Chriſtian Churches, upon the Foot of *Scripture* and *Antiquity*.

XI.

Another Singularity of this Writer is, that he does not allow the *Exerciſe* of the *Love* of *God*, and of *Faith*, *Hope*, *Charity*, and *Humility*, to be eſſentially *requiſite* to the worthy Reception of the holy Communion. He admits that they *may* be exerted upon that Occaſion: But he ſays, *the Inſtitution or Command cannot be ſaid to require the Exerciſe of thoſe extrinſick Virtues.** So it ſeems, thoſe Virtues are *extrinſick*, that is, *foreign* to the worthy Reception of the holy Communion. He deſires, a Text of Scripture to prove that thoſe Virtues are *required*.† I believe, I could cite ſome. But it is needleſs, becauſe the very *Nature* and *End* of the Sacrament requires the Exerciſe of thoſe Virtues, as it is *covenanting* with God, expreſſing our firm Reliance upon the ſole Merits of Chriſt for our Salvation, and maintaining Communion both with God and Man. All this might be eaſily made appear

* Defence, p. 61.
† Defence, p. 62.

appear from *Scripture*. And I muſt inſiſt upon it, that whatſoever Scripture by plain and good *Conſequence* teaches, *Scripture* teaches. In this Point alſo, I conceive, I have Dr. *Clarke* fully and clearly on my Side. §

XII.

The *Defence* ſtill pleads, || that *moral Virtues are an exact Imitation of God Himſelf*, as he had before pleaded in the *Anſwer*. ** I reminded him in return, †† that *human* Virtues could by no means juſtly pretend to any ſuch high Claim: And *human* Virtues were undoubtedly the Subject of Diſpute, and of which I had affirmed in my *Remarks*, that they wanted the Relief and additional Improvements of the two Sacraments.

He is now pleaſed to intimate, and another Gentleman * has more plainly ſaid it, that he meant not *human* Virtues, but *moral Virtues* in in the Abſtract. Now indeed, if the Queſtion had been whether *Abſtract Ideas* wanted the Benefit of the Sacraments, this Anſwer had been *pertinent:* But as it was only about *Men*, and about *Virtues* conſidered as in *Man*, the Anſwer perhaps is ſuch as any other Perſon of plain good Senſe would not readily have thought of.

XIII. Ano-

§ See *Clarke*'s Poſth. Sermons, Vol. IV. Serm. 6, 7, per. *Tot.*
|| Defence, p. 67.
** Anſwer to the Remarks, p. 72.
†† Nature and Oblig. p. 57.
* Chilton's poſitive Inſtitutions, &c. p. 47.

XIII.

ANOTHER Peculiarity in this Writer is, that our *moral Virtues*, or our *virtuous Practices*, *need no Expiation*. I had maintain'd, that our beſt and moſt virtuous Practices want Chriſt's *Expiation*, to render them *Saving*. † Upon which, this diverting Gentleman cries out: *God forbid! I wont pretend to ask for a Text of Scripture for this new Doctrine. Apply Chriſt's Expiation to virtuous Practices! I ever thought, that his Expiation was to be applied to Sins, to vicious not to virtuous Acts. But Good muſt be called Evil,* || &c. No *jeſting*, I beſeech you, with the *ſacred* Name, or in ſo *ſerious* a Subject. The Point to be maintain'd was, that however holy, or virtuous Men may be, yet they want the Benefit of Chriſt's *Expiation*. This Doctrine, which is as *old* as Chriſtianity (or rather as *old*, very nearly, as the Creation) I expreſs'd in ſuch Terms as wiſe and grave Men do, who know what they are about. Dr. *Clarke*, among others, thus words it: *Our beſt Virtues or Works are ſo imperfect as to need Pardon, rather than deſerve a Reward.* * And it is right to ſay, not only that our *Vices* (which is low, and flat, and ſhort of the whole Truth) but that even our *Virtues* and *beſt Services* need Pardon and Expiation, becauſe of their Defects. The Expreſſion is juſt: For

† Nature, and Obligat. *&c.* p. 64. compare 92.
|| Defence, p. 72, 73.
* *Clarke's* Poſth. Serm. Vol. IV. 317.

For tho' thoſe Virtues or Services are *defective*, they ought not therefore to be called *vicious Acts*; neither indeed are they ſuch, ſince they take their Denomination from the ruling Principle, and are beſides accepted as *Righteous*, through Chriſt.

But ſuppoſe there had been any ſlight Inaccuracy in an Expreſſion of common and conſtant Uſe, could any Thing be more trifling than thus to break off from the grave Subject of Debate, to teaze an Expreſſion, and thereupon to fall into ſo indecent a Fit of Levity? It is all one to me, whether it be ſaid that our *Virtues*, or our *Vices* ſtand in need of Chriſt's *Expiation*; provided it be but owned, that the very *beſt* of Men want it to ſupply their Defects, and that they are to come to the *Sacraments* for it; which is what I aſſerted.

XIV.

The *Defence* intimates more than once, that *Pagan* Virtues are as valuable as *Evangelical*, both being ſo near akin, and ſo much alike, that *one Egg is not liker to another**. A ſhocking Poſition; highly injurious to the *Chriſtian* Religion, and tending to Infidelity; Condemn'd expreſsly by our Church in her thirteenth Article, and by all ſober Chriſtian Divines. To confute it at large would be tedious, and lead me too far: Beſides that it is the leſs needful,

* Defence, p. 86, 87. compare p. 26.

r

after what has been done of that kind by the Learned and Judicious.* I ſhall content my ſelf therefore with offering only a few ſhort Hints.

PAGAN *Darkneſs* comes not up to *Goſpel-Light.*

1. THERE is not that *refined* Knowledge of *God*, of his *Nature*, of his *Works*, or of his *Ways.* Now, as all Virtue terminates in the *Love of God*, and in *Faith* towards Him, it muſt of Courſe follow, that when that *Love*, or *Faith* is more *Rational*, or more *Enlightned*, and at the ſame Time, *purer*, *ſtronger*, and more *intenſe*; I ſay, it muſt of courſe follow, that there every *Virtue* is ſo much *raiſed* in Proportion, as the *Love* of God is, from whence it flows, and on which it reſts. And there muſt of Courſe be a proportionate Defect in all *Pagan* Virtue,† as wanting that ſound, rational, and elevated Knowledge of God, which Chriſtianity ſupplies.

2. THERE are alſo wanting to *Pagan* Virtue, a clear and diſtinct View of *Heaven* and *heavenly* Things, and a *certain* well-grounded *Aſſurance* of a *Life* to *come*, and of a *future Judgment*; beſides

* See particularly *The Biſhop of* London's *Second paſtoral Letter*, p. 68, *&c.*

† Quemadmodum enim in naturali Religione imperfectiones & defectus ſunt; ita in omnibus vitæ *officiis* defectus ſunt in ſtatu naturæ proportionati. Sicut enim in Phyſiologia dici ſolet, imbecillitates & peccata primæ concoctionis haud facile in ſecunda & tertia poſſe emendari; ita cum prima *virtus* ſit *Religio*, qua proportione *Naturalis* deficit *Religio*, eadem omnes ab iſta Religione promanantes *virtutes* deficere eſt neceſſe.

Sharrock. de Fin. & Offic. p. 52.

ſides many excellent *Motives*, *Incitements*, *Helps*, and *Encouragements* to Virtue. Now to pretend that theſe Advantages contribute nothing towards the raiſing and refining *Chriſtian* Virtues above *Pagan*, or that the Want of them muſt not inevitably ſink all *Pagan* Attainments much below what *Chriſtians* may attain to, is as wild and abſurd, as to admit Cauſes without Effects, or Effects without Cauſes. *Chriſtian* Virtues therefore, when properly ſuch, muſt be allowed to exceed *Pagan*, as much as *Light* does *Obſcurity*. The Schools of *Rome* or *Athens* were never yet comparable to the School of *Chriſt*: Nor were the Virtues there taught, fit to be named with Thoſe that are recommended by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and wrought by the holy Spirit of God. A Man may better pretend that the Civility of a home-bred Ruſtick comes up to the Politeneſs of the beſt-bred Gentleman, than that *Pagan* Virtue is as high and heavenly as the *Chriſtian*.

These Things are clear, evident, and unconteſtable. But yet becauſe ſometimes a ſlight Objection or two weighs more on one Side, than Demonſtrations on the other; it will be neceſſary to hear and examine what the *Defence* has to plead in Favour of *Pagan* Attainments.

1. He pleads: *Pagan Virtue either is Virtue, or it is not.*

If Pagan Virtue is the ſame as defective Virtue, it is the ſame as that which is not Virtue: Or if it be real Virtue, 'twill be impoſſible to diſtin-

*guiſh very much betwixt Virtue and Virtue.** The Sum of this Argument is, that Pagan Virtue is either as Excellent as Evangelical, or it is no Virtue at all. If ſuch be really the Caſe, and there be no Medium, then let it be *no Virtue at all:* For we are not concern'd to make it Virtue. One Thing we are certain of, that it is not *Chriſtian* Virtue, nor any way comparable to it. We demonſtrate that it is vaſtly defective in Compariſon: And if becauſe it is thus *Defective*, it is therefore *not Virtue*, let it then loſe its Name, rather than upon account of a meer *Name*, be put upon the ſame Foot with Chriſtian Graces. The Truth is, *Pagan* Virtue is but a kind of *nominal* Virtue. Their good Works are *materially*, but not *formally* good; *ſpeciouſly*, or in Appearance good, not *really* and *ſtrictly* ſo; they are *comparatively* good, as being leſs evil, or as approaching nearer to the Rule of Action, but not *abſolutely* good. And " ſince " none of our Actions can be *ſtrictly* good, and " Actions performed by *Pagans* cannot be *im-* " *putatively* good, therefore tho' they are *ſpeci-* " *ouſly*, or *comparatively* good, yet by reaſon of " that Imperfection which muſt needs cleave to " them, becauſe it is not done away through " Chriſt, they are ſtrictly evil, that is, Sins.†" Were they done as God hath willed and commanded according to the Goſpel Rule, they would be *imputatively* good thro' Faith in Chriſt, like

* Defence, p. 26.
† *Bennet's* Directions, &c. p. 78.

like the good Works of Chriſtians: But ſince they are not perfect in *themſelves*, and their Imperfection is not removed by Faith in Chriſt, they muſt of courſe be *faulty*.

2. But the *Defence* ſays: *He that conforms his moral Actions to the Reaſons of Things, directs them right, and wants nothing to make them exactly what they ought to be: And to call ſuch a Conformity* pagan, *in Oppoſition to ſome other Virtue which is not more exact, nor can be more exact, is only to blind People with ſcholaſtick Jargon*, &c.* To the Ignorant and Undiſcerning, any Thing may be *Jargon*, as to the Blind all Things are dark. If this Gentleman thinks I here treat him with ~~too~~ little Ceremony, let him remember what Church, or Churches, he here throws Contempt upon, by calling their true Chriſtian Doctrine *ſcholaſtick Jargon*. If he did not like it, or could not *ſubſcribe* to it, he ought however to treat it with more Modeſty. But to the Point. The whole Force of his Argument lies in the ſuppoſed *Conformity* of *Pagan* Works to the *Reaſons of Things*: Which he takes for granted, might be *exact*, and *perfect*; tho' it is Demonſtration, that they were not, could not. Their Actions indeed might be *materially* good, good as to the *outward* Act, being ſerviceable to Mankind; and ſo may the Actions of *Hypocrites*, or even the Services of *Brutes* be: But to make an Action *formally* good and perfect, the *Manner* and *Motive*, and *End* of the Action, with ſeveral other

* Defence, p. 27.

other Circumſtances, muſt be taken into account. The wiſer Heathens themſelves were very ſenſible, that their very beſt Actions were lame and faulty, far from exact.* In a ſtrict Senſe, none but the *divine* Actions have an *exact* Conformity to the *Reaſons* of *Things:* Becauſe God alone can extend his Views to *all* the Reaſons of Things. Creatures may go as far as their Views reach, and their Abilities or Opportunities permit. The more *Light*, the more *Strength*, the livelier *Faith*, and the brighter *Hope* they have, together with ſtrict *Sincerity* and *Integrity*, ſo much the more excellent, and exalted their Virtues are. Suppoſe a *Pagan* falls down to *pray* (as Prayer is a ſuppos'd moral Duty) if his Notions of God be as *worthy* of the divine *Majeſty*, and as ſuitable to the *Truth* of Things, as the *Chriſtian* Notions are; and if he prays with as good Judgment and as right Diſcernment of *what* he is to pray for, and with the ſame *Faith* and *Truſt* in God, and with the ſame *pure* Intentions, and *heavenly* Views, and with the like *Fervour* and *Conſtancy* as a Chriſtian is taught to do; then perhaps the Prayer of a *Pagan* may be as conformable to the *Reaſons of Things*, as the Prayer of the beſt Chriſtian. But does not every Man perceive, at firſt Sight, that the Thing is impoſſible?

Suppose a *Pagan* to perform ſome Acts of *Juſtice* or of *Mercy:* If he has the ſame View to the

* Diis immortalibus ſolis & virtus & beata vita contingit: Nobis umbra quædam illorum bonorum, & ſimilitudo. Accedimus ad illa, non pervenimus. Ratio vero diis Hominibuſque communis. Hæc in illis conſummata eſt, in nobis conſummabilis: Sed ad Deſperatianem nos vitia noſtra perducunt. *Seneca Epiſt.* 92. p. 322.

the *Glory* of *God*, and the ſame Ideas alſo of the divine Being as a Chriſtian may have: If he has as ſtrong a *Faith* in a World to come, the ſame *Hopes* of living hereafter in *Heaven*, both *Soul* and *Body*, living alſo in *Society* with God and Chriſt and the holy Angels; if he abſtracts from *worldly* Views, ſeeks not the Honour, Love, or Eſteem of Men, but of God; if with ſuch upright Intentions, and ſuch Singleneſs of Heart, as becomes a Chriſtian, he performs theſe moral Duties, then let his *Virtue* be compared to *evangelical* Righteouſneſs. But the Suppoſition is palpably abſurd, and the Thing impracticable: So vain is it, to ſet *pagan* Virtues in Competition with *chriſtian* Graces. All that I can ſee in the Argument offered in the *Defence* is only this, that ſo far as *pagan* Virtues are ſtrictly Virtue, ſo far they are *exact*: Which if repeated a Thouſand Times over, will be of no Moment at all for determining the Queſtion now before us. We allow that *pagan* Virtues are Virtue ſo far as they are Virtue: But then we deny that they are Virtue ſo far, or to ſuch a Degree of Perfection, as *chriſtian* Virtues are. They are not ſo conformable to the *Reaſons of Things*, becauſe *Pagans* have not ſo *large* a View, nor ſo *juſt* and *correct* a Notion of the *Reaſons of Things*, as Chriſtians have. Their Virtues therefore are much more *defective*, and their Services low, and lame: On account of which Defects and their coming far ſhort of the Rule, They have the *Nature of Sins*.||

Sins.|| And ſo have even *chriſtian* Services too, conſidered in *themſelves*, and abſtracting from the Grace and Merits of Chriſt, through which only they are accepted as *good*, and made *well-pleaſing*, and *worthy*,* notwithſtanding their *Defects*. However, there is no Compariſon between *Pagan* Virtues and *Chriſtian*, as there is no Compariſon between their reſpective Attainments, Talents, or Advantages.

3. The *Defence* ſays further: *I ſhould be glad to hear an exact Diſtinction made betwixt the Gratitude, Humanity, Juſtice, and Charity, in* Socrates, *and Gratitude, Humanity, Juſtice, and Charity, in any* Saint. He may eaſily make out the *Diſtinction*, from what I have already ſaid. But if he ſtill wants to be farther informed, I ſhall juſt hint to him, that *Socrates*'s Knowledge of divine Things, was not ſo *large*, or *clear*, nor his Faith ſo *ſtrong*, nor his Hope ſo *lively*, nor his Aims ſo *pure* and *heavenly*: And therefore his Gratitude, Juſtice, &c. were of coarſer Alloy, and much inferior in every Reſpect, to *Abraham*'s,

|| Dicimus ad opus Bonum morale (id eſt ad opus perfectiſſimè bonum, cuique nulla adhæret Ἀνομία) neceſſariam eſſe *Gratiam*, non quamlibet, ſed quæ ſit ordinis ſupernaturalis, & per quam primo creatur in Hominibus Fides t Nec hæc qualiſcunque, ſed Chriſtiana & infuſa. Ab hujuſmodi Fide incipere dicimus omnem volitionem perfecte bonam, & ſinè ea impoſſibile factu eſſe aliquod opus quod perfectiſſimè bonum dici debeat. Nec tamen dicimus opera *Gentilium* meliora, Chriſtiana Fide carentium, protenus *mera peccata* eſſe——Si quæratur, an qui propter Dei Amorem, Beatitudinis etiam ſibi acquirendæ intuitu, naturæ ſuæ placitis; inſitiſque à Deo notitiis practicis obſequi ſtudebant, in pio ſinceroque hujuſmodi obſequii conatu peccabant necne? Reſpondebimus, eos hoc conatu & *ſtudio* non peccâſſe, ſed *imperfectione* conatûs operiſque hujuſmodi re vera ſemper peccâſſe. *Sharrock de fin. & op.* p. 52.

* See *Clarke*'s Poſth. Serm. XIII. Vol. IV. p. 317, &c.

ham's, for inſtance, or St. *Paul's*. For tho' the *outward* Acts might be the ſame, yet *Socrates's* Mind was not ſo richly furniſh'd, nor ſo divinely adorned; for which Reaſon his Virtues were not ſo fair or bright as the other, any more than *human* Virtues come up to *angelical*. The better cultivated the Mind is, the more refined and raiſed will every Virtue be that comes from it, or dwells in it: As from a rich and well-watered Soil, we may expect the choiceſt Plants, and from the beſt Trees, the beſt Fruits. *Socrates* was perhaps as excellent a Man as any one in his Circumſtances could be: But if he had been bred up at the Feet of a *Gamaliel*, he had been more excellent; and yet much more ſo, had he been train'd up under Chriſt. He never had *Lectures* comparable to the *Sermon in the Mount*: Neither was his *Demon* (whatever it was) able to illuminate, or elevate the Soul like the *Spirit of God*. Theſe Things are very plain, and could not have been miſſed by the Author of the *Defence*, had he not firſt confounded himſelf with a falſe Principle, that *Virtue* cannot be better than *Virtue*, or that all Virtues are alike, and equal, admitting of no *Degrees*. And this he ſeems to have been led into, by conſidering Virtue in the *Abſtract*, *ideal* Virtue, and not as it ſubſiſts in the Subject of it, in particular Perſons. The abſtract *Idea* is indeed always the *ſame Idea*: But the Virtues as ſubſiſting in their reſpective Subjects, are greater or leſs, as they more or leſs anſwer to that *Idea*. Or if he allows no-

thing to be *called* Virtue that comes not ſtrictly up to that *Idea*, he muſt diſcard all *Pagan* Virtues at once; and, at length, it will amount only to a Strife about *Words*, while *Things* remain juſt as before. But I paſs on.

XV.

In the following Parts of the *Defence*, the Author (which I am ſorry to ſee) approaches nearer and nearer to Principles of *Deiſm*, and lays down Tenets, ſuch as are expreſsly condemn'd by Dr. *Clarke* equally with me, and I think by all other *Chriſtian* Divines. One of his Tenets is, That *by the Religion of Nature Men may know* how *God is to be worſhipped* *. Had he ſaid only, Men may know *that* God is to be worſhipped, he had ſaid Truth: But he particularly words it *how*, and prints it in *Italick*, to ſhew the Emphaſis he lays upon it. I ſhall confront this new Doctrine with the excellent Words of Dr. *Clarke*, who, ſpeaking of the *Pagans*, ſays: "The Manner in which God might be acceptably worſhipped, theſe Men were *unavoidably* ignorant of. That God ought to be worſhipped, is in the general, as evident and plain from the Light of Nature, as any thing can be: But in *what particular Manner*, and with *what kind* of Service he will be worſhipped, cannot be certainly diſcovered by bare Reaſon †." In another

* Defence, p. 96.
† *Clarke's* Evidences, &c. p. 178.

another Place of the ſame Treatiſe, he ſays: "There was plainly a Neceſſity of ſome parti-"cular Revelation to diſcover in *what Manner*, "and with *what Kind* of external Service, God "might acceptably be worſhipped *." This he both ſays and proves at large in the Places referred to. And I believe, in this Matter, he has the *Chriſtian* World on his Side, againſt the Author of the *Defence*; who, in this Inſtance, manifeſtly goes off from *Chriſtian* Principles.

XVI.

THE *Defence* ſays farther, that *the Religion of Nature will ſhew, how Men may be reconciled to, and accepted by God*†. Worſe and worſe. This again is directly contrary to what Dr. *Clarke* teaches; who among many other juſt and pertinent Obſervations upon this Head, ſays: "It "cannot poſitively be proved from any of God's "Attributes, that he is abſolutely obliged to "pardon all Creatures all their Sins, at all Times, "barely and immediately upon their repenting. "There ariſes therefore from Nature no ſuffi-"cient Comfort to Sinners, but an anxious and "endleſs Solicitude about the Means of appea-"ſing the Deity §. In another Place ||, he expreſſes the ſame Thought thus: "There was a

* *Clarke*, *Ibid.* p. 199, 200. See alſo *Biſhop of London's Second Paſtoral Letter*, p. 15.

† Defence, p. 96.

§ *Clarke's* Evidences, *&c.* p. 182, 183.

|| *Ibid.* p. 200.

" Neceſſity of ſome *particular Revelation* to " diſcover what *Expiation* God would accept for " Sin, by which the Authority, Honour, and " Dignity of his Laws might be effectually vin- " dicated." This alſo he proves at large. The ſame Thing has been briefly and ſtrongly preſſed now lately, by another very able Hand *.

As no one could ſuppoſe that any *Chriſtian* could diſpute this Point with us, ſo it has not been the Way to quote *Scripture* Texts at all upon it. But the Author of the *Defence* happening to be a Perſon that profeſſes a Regard for *Scripture*; it will be proper to acquaint him, that his Doctrine flatly contradicts St. *Paul*'s, as I ſhall eaſily prove to him. I begin with Rom. iii. 20. *By the Deeds of the Law, there ſhall no Fleſh be juſtified in his Sight, for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin.* The whole Drift and Scope of the Apoſtle is to prove, that no Law could juſtify, but the Law of Faith by Jeſus Chriſt. And as his Argument concludes againſt the *Jewiſh Law*, ſo it ſtill more ſtrongly concludes againſt the *Law of Nature*, leſs perfect than the Jewiſh Law, as being *contained* in it, and making but a *Part* of it †.

THE

* Biſhop of *London*'s Second Paſtoral Letter, p. 14, 15.

† Si Lex à Deo data, tanquam Legis naturalis per peccatum obſcuratæ quædam Interpres, explicans eam & renovans, Juſtitiam præſtare non potuit, multo minus id poteſt ſola *lex naturalis*. Quare ſi ex operibus Legis Scriptæ nemo *Judæus* juſtificatur, conſequenter intelligendum relinquitur, multo minus juſtificari poſſe ex operibus *Legis Naturæ*. *Bull. Harmon. Apoſtol.* Part II. c. viii. S. 8. p. 460.

Quæ adverſus Legem Moſaicam diſputat Paulus, multo fortius, ut jam alicubi notavimus, contra *Naturæ Legem* militant. *Idem.* p. 483.

The Point is ſtill plainer from Gal. ii. 21. *If Righteouſneſs come by the Law, then Chriſt is dead in vain.* The Argument concludes irrefragably againſt every Law but the *Chriſtian* *, conſequently, againſt the *Law of Nature*, as much as againſt the *Jewiſh Law*. The Apoſtle plainly aſſerts that there was a Neceſſity of Chriſt's Death, becauſe Mankind could not be juſtified by any *Law*, but by *Grace* only. If Righteouſneſs could come by the *Law of Nature*, then Chriſt died *in vain*; which being abſurd to ſuppoſe, it is no leſs abſurd to imagine, that *the Religion of Nature could ſhew how Men might be reconciled to, and accepted by God.* Let us proceed a little farther to obſerve, how contrary St. *Paul*'s Doctrine is to that of the *Defence*. The Apoſtle ſays: *That no Man is juſtified by the Law in the Sight of God, is evident: For the Juſt ſhall live by Faith* †. Now unleſs the Law of Nature contained the Doctrine of *Juſtification by Faith in Chriſt*, it is impoſſible (if the Apoſtle ſays true) that the Religion of Nature ſhould ſhew how Men may be reconciled to, and accepted by God. St. *Paul* goes on in the ſame Chapter,

* Summa hæc eſt: Rejicit à Juſtificatione Apoſtolus Paulus Opera.

1. *Ritualia*, quæ Lex ceremonialis præſcripſit.

2. *Moralia*, quæ nativis Hominum viribus in ſtatu ſive *Legis* ſive *meræ Naturæ* fiunt, ante & citra Gratiam Evangelii.

3. *Judaica*, ſive futilem illam Juſtitiam quam docuerunt judæorum magiſtri.

4. Denique *univerſa* à Chriſto Mediatore divulſa, quæque ſua vi, vel citra reſpectum ad Fœdus Gratiæ, Chriſti ſanguine ſtabilitum, ſalutem ſempiternam aſſequerentur.

Bull. ibid. c. xviii. S. 2. p. 508.

† Gal. iii. 11.

ter, to ſay: *If there had been a Law given which could have given Life, verily Righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the Law: But the Scripture hath concluded all under Sin, that the Promiſe by Faith of Jeſus Chriſt might be given to them that believe**. Now, I ſuppoſe, the Religion of Nature had been *given* long before St. *Paul* wrote: And had he known any thing of this admirable Uſe and Virtue of it, that it could ſhew *how Men may be reconciled to, and accepted by God*, he could not have failed to have taken ſome Notice of it, and to have own'd that there was a Law of Nature *given* which could *give Life*, and that *Righteouſneſs might be* by that Law of Nature, independent of the Law of Chriſt. But St. *Paul* knew no ſuch Doctrine; or if he did, he condemn'd it as *proud*, and *falſe* Doctrine. *Unbelievers* may diſpute this Point both with St. *Paul* and us, and may create us ſome Trouble by rejecting our *ſtrong Evidence*; tho' at the ſame Time we know they can only trifle againſt the infallible Word of God. However, as I ſaid, they may create us ſome Trouble, by leading us into a more intricate Diſpute about the *Nature* and *Reaſon* of the Thing it ſelf, which we are ſcarce qualified to judge of. But as to profeſſed *Believers*, there is a ſhort and eaſy Way to be taken with them, by producing the *Texts*, and then obſerving to them that they forget their *Rule*, run counter to their *own Principles*, and are *ſelf-condemn'd*.

* Gal. iii. 21, 22.

XVII.

The *Defence* pretends alſo, that *the Religion of Nature will ſhew a Future State of Rewards and Puniſhments.* I muſt obſerve, in the firſt Place, (ſince the Author appears as a *Second* to Dr. *Clarke* in this Cauſe,) how much he runs againſt his *Principal* in this Point alſo. Dr. *Clarke* ſays thus: "There was a Neceſſity of ſome "*particular Revelation*, to give Men full Aſſu- "rance of the Truth of thoſe great *Motives* of "Religion, *the Rewards and Puniſhments of a* "*future State*; which, notwithſtanding the "ſtrongeſt Arguments of Reaſon, Men could not "yet forbear doubting of*." As to the Generality, at leaſt, of the Heathens, under the *Religion of Nature*, St. *Paul*'s Account, I ſuppoſe, may be admitted, that they were *Strangers from the Covenants of Promiſe, having no Hope, and without God in the World*†. Some indeed of the better Sort had *faint Hopes* of ſuch a Thing, and many had *dark* and *confuſed* Notions of it; but neither *certain* enough to be depended upon, nor *clear* enough to be of any great Uſe‖. Beſides that none of them had any thing whereon to fix a well-grounded *Hope*, being all concluded under *Sin*: So that I ſee not what this boaſted Benefit of the *Religion of Nature* really amounted to. Let the Author of the *Defence*, now

* *Clarke*'s Evidences, p. 200. compare 184, *&c.*

† Epheſ. ii. 12.

‖ See Biſhop *Bull*'s *Harmon. Apoſtol.* Diſſert. 2. c. x. S. 13 p. 476. Biſhop of *London*'s Second Paſtoral Letter, p. 17, 18, 19.

now at this Day, after the lateſt Improvements in Philoſophy and moral Science; I ſay, let him try if he can from mere *Reaſon* demonſtrate any thing more than this, that there will be ſome *Difference* in another World between the *more* and *leſs* ſinful (all being *Sinners*) without determining *what* it will be, or how *long* it will laſt. I am perſwaded, when he ſets his *Bible* aſide, he will not be able to prove more than I have mention'd. I am very certain, he can prove little or nothing of *Rewards*; becauſe we have none of us a full *Claim*, or *ſtrict Right* to any. Happy is he, that is to have the ſlighteſt *Puniſhment*: So ſtand we upon the Foot of mere *natural Religion*: And, I think, it is no very comfortable Proſpect to boaſt of. As it is impoſſible for Men to form an adequate Idea of infinite *Holineſs*, *Juſtice*, and *Wiſdom*, or of what they require; ſo it is impoſſible for Man naturally to know, upon what *Terms* God can accept and reward Sinners. God has declared and ſhewn the *Terms* upon which he can do it: But they are ſuch as give no Encouragement for any one to reſt upon *natural Religion*, but ſuch as ſhew that all who have nothing elſe to reſt upon, are loſt and undone for ever. If any may be ſaved *in it*, yet certainly none can be ſaved *by it*.

XVIII.

The *Defence* farther intimates, that the Religion of Nature *will ſhew the Duties we are to practiſe to one another* *. Lamely enough. But

* Defence, p 99.

But let us hear Dr. *Clarke* to the contrary, in this Matter alſo as before. " There " was a Neceſſity of ſome *particular* divine Re- " velation, to make the *whole* Doctrine of Reli- " gion *clear* and *obvious* to all Capacities, to add " *Weight* and *Authority* to the plaineſt Precepts, " and to furniſh Men with extraordinary Aſſiſ- " tances to enable them to overcome the Cor- " ruptions of their Nature. "*

I ſhall take Leave to ſay, more expreſsly, that the Religion of Nature does not ſhew *all* the Duties we owe to one another; particularly, not the Duties we owe to Mens *Souls*. And as to thoſe Duties which the Religion of Nature really does ſhew, it ſhews them but by Halves. It ſhews indeed the *material* Part, but very little of the *formal*, in which chiefly conſiſts the tranſcendent Excellency and Perfection of *Chriſtian* Duties above *natural* Performances. It ſhews not thoſe excellent *Ends*, *Motives*, *Principles*, which make up more than two Thirds of *Chriſtian Duty* or *Virtue*, and are indeed the Life and Spirit of it. To direct a Duty *right*, is part of Duty: To aim it *well*, and to purſue it upon *high* and *heavenly* Views, goes into the *Diſpoſition* of the Agent; and Definition of Virtue; for it is the *Diſpoſition* of the Heart that makes the *Virtue*, and is *Virtue*, and perfects the *Duty*. For which Reaſon, I ſhall not admit that the Religion of Nature ſhews the *Duties*, but the Shell rather of the Duties which we owe

* *Clarke's* Evidences &c. pag. 200.

to each other. A very judicious Writer, *ſpeaking of the *feeble Reliques* of *natural Light*, obſerves, that its *Uſe is reſtrained to very narrow Bounds*, and further adds: "We may, I con-" feſs, by this Means arrive at the Knowledge of " ſome few Duties: We may perceive ſome part " of that which is more eſpecially criminal in " the oppoſite Irregularities: But then we ſhall " continue Strangers to the Rectitude of many " Duties, and to the Obliquity of many Sins; " according to that of St. *Paul*; *I had not* " *known Luſt, except the Law had ſaid, Thou* " *ſhalt not covet.*†

XIX.

The *Defence* admits the *Sufficiency of Reaſon to be a Guide in Matters of Religion.*‖ To obviate which Pretence, Dr. *Clarke* very rightly ſays: "In Experience and Practice, it hath on " the contrary appeared to be *altogether impoſſible* " for Philoſophy and bare Reaſon, to reform " Mankind effectually, without the Aſſiſtance of " ſome higher Principle.**" But the *Inſufficiency* of Reaſon to be a *Guide* in ſuch Matters, has very lately been ſet forth †† in the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt Manner for the Conviction of *Infidels*: And one might think, that St. *Paul*'s Authority, were there nothing elſe, might be enough

* *Placete*, of Conſcience, p. 38.
† Rom. vii. 7.
‖ Defence, p. 96.
** *Clarke*'s Evidences, *&c.* p. 195. comp. p. 201.
†† Biſhop of *London*'s Second Paſtoral Letter, p. 7, *&c.*

enough to convince any *Chriſtian*. To the Texts before cited I ſhall add another: *The Law made nothing perfect: But the bringing in of a better Hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God.** I obſerve alſo, it is St. *Paul*'s Doctrine, that the Scriptures only can make us *wiſe unto Salvation.*‖

XX.

THE *Defence* admits (and what will not that Author admit?) that *the Religion of Nature is very perfect:*† Tho' by his own Confeſſion, it wants many *Motives*, *Incitements*, *Encouragements*, and *Aſſiſtances*, to *make Men more ready and willing to perform it.* As if the want of thoſe were no Imperfection. But wiſe Men know that it wants alſo *Fulneſs*, *Clearneſs*, *Certainty*, *Authority*, and the Power of *juſtifying*, and that it can give no Man a Title to the Kingdom of Heaven.

PLACETE obſerves to our Purpoſe, as follows: "As the Light of Nature has been miſerably obſcured by Sin, and the Conſequences of Sin, ſo had it retained its *original Purity*, it could not have inſtructed us in all Things neceſſary to Salvation."§ The Obſervation is juſt. Men were never left to the meer *Law of Nature*, no not in Paradiſe. God ſuperadded a

 poſitive

* Heb. vii. 19.
‖ 2 Tim. iii. 15.
† Defence, p. 97.
§ *Placete*, on Conſcience, Book I. c. vii. p. 52.

poſitive Law to *natural* Religion, even in the State of Innocence; which he would not have done, if natural Religion had been *perfect*, or *ſufficient*: For infinite Wiſdom deſigns nothing *ſuperfluous*, does nothing *in vain*. It would have been arbitrary and tyrannical, to have impoſed a *poſitive* Law, only to create *needleſs* Difficulties, and *unneceſſary* Hazards. Divine Wiſdom ſaw that the Religion of Nature was not *perfect* enough to found his *Covenant* upon, and therefore ſuperadded a *poſitive* Precept, and made Life and Death to depend upon it. Biſhop *Bull* ſays: "Beſides the Seeds of *natural* "*Religion* ſown in Man's Mind at the Creation, "he was alſo endowed with certain *ſupernatural* "Gifts and Powers, in which his *Perfection* "chiefly conſiſted, and without which his *natu*"*ral* Powers were in themſelves *inſufficient* to "the Attainment of a heavenly Immortality: "And conſequently the *Law of Nature* as con"ſider'd now in fallen Man without divine *Re*"*velation*, and without any *ſupernatural* Af"ſiſtance, is much leſs able to confer the heaven"ly Immortality and Bliſs upon them that live up "to it."*

Where then was the *Perfection* of the Law of Nature, which could neither fully inſtruct Men in their *Duty*, nor confer *Immortality?* There was wanting *ſupernatural* Light, and *ſupernatural* Aſſiſtance even from the Beginning. Life and Death depended on *reveal'd* Law, and *poſitive* Injunction.

* Bull. Opera Poſth. *State of Man before the Fall*, p. 1066.

Injunction. The moſt exalted Reaſon which *Adam* and *Eve* may be ſuppoſed to have, could not tell them *what* and *who* God was, nor what *Terms* he would expect, nor what *Kind* of Happineſs he intended for them, nor by what *Helps* or *Means* they might come at it, or be render'd worthy of it. Man's Right to Immortality even then, was not founded in the *Law of Nature*, but in the *poſitive* Law and Covenant ſuperadded to it.* So abſurd is it in our Dregs of Degeneracy, to talk of the *Perfection* of the Law of Nature. And what ſhall we ſay to the Caſe of *Angels?* If the *Law of Nature* be perfect any where, one would expect to find it ſo in them: And yet ſo far as we can judge of them from Scripture Accounts, one great Part of their *Perfection* lies in their quick and ready Diſpatches of *occaſional* Services, in their prompt Compliances with *poſitive* Commands. Upon the whole, I ſee no manner of Foundation any where for this boaſted *Perfection* of I know not what Law of Nature: To me it appears Fancy and Fiction only, having nothing but Strength of Imagination to reſt upon.

XXI.

The *Defence* aſſerts, that *the Religion of Nature and that of Jeſus are exactly the ſame:*† As if the Light of a *Candle* were the ſame with the Light

* See *Bull. Ibid.* p. 1082, *&c.*
† Defence, p. 98.

Light of the *Sun*. He ſays, *Virtue is the ſame in both Caſes, of equal Extent.* As if there were no Virtue in reverencing and adoring God the Father as *Father*, or Chriſt Jeſus his *Son*, and our *Redeemer*, or the *Holy Ghoſt* moſt intimately allied to Both, and the *Guide* and *Sanctifier* of Mankind: Or as if there was no Virtue in Faith, Hope, or Charity, ſuch as are properly *Chriſtian*, and far exceed all *Pagan* Endowments; or no Virtue in renouncing our own Righteouſneſs, nor in ſetting our Affections on Things above, nor in reſiſting the Devil; to ſay nothing of many other *Chriſtian* Duties, which the meer Light of Nature knows not of. Chriſtian Morality is of much wider *Extent* than *natural*; founded upon vaſtly larger *Diſcoveries*, and higher *Views*, and flowing from a Senſe of ſtricter and more engaging *Relations*: By all which there is new *Matter* afforded for more and greater Virtues, for a more *extenſive* and more *exalted* Morality.

It is not a juſt Way of reaſoning, to plead in this Caſe, that Duties flow from the *Relations* we bear to God and to one another, which Relations being always the *ſame*, the Duties therefore muſt be always the *ſame*, neither more nor fewer, neither higher nor lower. For, in the *firſt Place*, ſtrictly ſpeaking, Duties do not flow from the *Relations*, but from the *known* Relations, or from the *Diſcoveries* made of thoſe Relations: *Unknown* Relations create no *Obligation*, infer no *Duty*. There is therefore always as much

much Room left for inlarging the Compaſs and Extent of Duty, as there is for throwing in more Light: *For to whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required.* The Religion of Nature expands itſelf, becomes larger and fuller, upon every new *Manifeſtation* God makes of his *Nature*, *Works*, and *Ways*: And ſince the *Goſpel* has brought in many and great Diſcoveries of ſeveral Kinds, it is more than a *Republication* of the original Law of Nature; it is (as to its moral Part) natural Religion *augmented* and *filled up* with large Additions and Improvements, in Proportion to the additional *Light* the Goſpel brings with it.

Then, *Secondly*, as to Relations continuing always the *ſame*, it is not ſtrictly true: For Relations may ariſe from *new* Circumſtances, and *tranſient* Acts, (Acts of Favour, Covenant-Acts, *&c.*) as well as from the *permanent* Natures of Things. The Relations of a *Benefactor* to the Perſon *oblig'd*, of a *Deliverer* to the Perſon *delivered*, of an *Inſtructor* to the Perſon *inſtructed*, and the like, commence in Time, bring *new* Obligations with them, and *additional* Duties. The *Relation* which a *Chriſtian* bears to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, is not preciſely the ſame with that of a *Jew*, or a *Pagan*, but is a *nearer* and more intimate Relation; as Chriſtians have been admitted into a cloſer Acquaintance with them, and into greater Privileges. Neither is the *Relation* of one Chriſtian to another the ſame with that of *Jew* to *Jew*, or *Pagan* to *Pagan*,

but

but a *ſtricter* Relation, and ſo a Ground and Foundation for ſome *ſpecial* Virtues and Duties. From hence may be underſtood how the Religion of *Jeſus* is much more *extenſive*, even in *natural*, or *moral* Duties (to ſay nothing here of *poſitive*) than mere natural Religion, as much as Goſpel-Light, and Goſpel-Diſcoveries are more *extenſive* than the Diſcoveries of unaſſiſted Reaſon. To ſay all in a few Words, Chriſtianity contains all that is really good in all other Religions, and has beſides a great deal of rich Furniture of its own. Such is the tranſcendent Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion: A Rule full and compleat beyond all Rules, and ſuch as can *render the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good Works*.*

I have now run through one and twenty Articles of the *Defence*, appearing to me ſo many Articles of Error. Several of them would have deſerved a larger Diſcuſſion, eſpecially the laſt ſix, or ſeven. But I conſidered, that they will, very probably, be more minutely examined, and confuted over again, in the Controverſy we have with *Infidels*; and that they make no Part of the Diſpute between Dr. *Clarke*'s real Friends and me. The Doctor is plainly on my Side in many of the Articles (I think, about half the Number) and his Friends, as I conceive, will have Reaſon to complain of Diſappointment in This their Advocate. He undertook to defend the learned Doctor againſt *The Remarks*, which he has not done:

* 2 Tim. iii. 17.

done: But inſtead of clearing up, or juſtifying the *exceptionable* Places of the Doctor's Writings, he has in effect been finding fault with the *unexceptionable*; covertly cenſuring ſome of the *beſt* and *ſoundeſt* Principles which the Doctor had maintained in Oppoſition to *Deiſm*. Somebody alſo, as I may note by the Way (one that is much an Admirer of Dr. *Clarke*, but of Dr. *Sykes* more) has taken the like Freedom with Dr. *Clarke*'s Defence of the *Prophecies*; injudiciouſly cenſuring what he ought to commend,* juſt as the Writer of the *Defence* has done.

But the Conduct of this Gentleman convinces me more and more of what I formerly hinted in my *Remarks*,† about the Neceſſity of fixing a certain Rule, (*viz.* "*Scripture* interpreted according to Chriſtian Antiquity) to "prevent the endleſs Excurſions of Flight and "Fancy; and the Neceſſity alſo of returning "to our old and well-tried Principles, and there "making our Stand; ſince if we once yield to "go at all farther than is reaſonable or warrant-"able in the *ſubverſive* Way, there is no know-"ing when or where to ſtop". When Men deſert their *Rule*, and their moſt faithful *Guides*, to follow their own Wandrings, and to ſtrike out a Religion for themſelves, by themſelves, they are apt to deviate wide and far from Truth and Reaſon, and to involve themſelves in a Multitude of Errors. This Writer is himſelf a

* See *Republick of Letters* for *September* 1729. p. 189.
† Remarks, p. 92.

lively Inſtance and Example of it. But he conceives, all the while (and I have Charity enough to think him ſerious in it) that he has at length hit upon *the true Method of proceeding in the Argument againſt ſerious and rational Infidels.** It may be his real Judgment: But then he might more prudently have kept it to himſelf, becauſe he cannot reaſonably expect that the Judgment of a ſingle Man ſhould weigh much againſt the united Judgment of the wiſeſt and ableſt Defenders of the Chriſtian Faith, ancient and modern, as well as againſt plain Scripture, and the Truth and Reaſon of Things. To me he appears to have been vaſtly more complaiſant to *Infidels*, than St. *Paul* would have been, and to have yielded up ſo much to them, as ſcarce to have left himſelf *Chriſtian* Ground to ſtand upon. He is pleaſed however with the Thought, that after all his laviſh Conceſſions to them,† they cannot prove Chriſtianity to be *uſeleſs*, or not to have ſtill *very great* and *very good Advantages*. I hope, they cannot: It would be ſtrange, if that *great Salvation*, that brighteſt Demonſtration of divine Philanthropy, that unexhauſtible Fund of Bleſſings and Comforts, could appear *uſeleſs* upon any Suppoſition; ſo *great* and ſo innumerable are its *Uſes*. But will this cold Manner of recommending Chriſtianity do the Chriſtian Cauſe any Service? Would it be any great Commendation of the Sun-Beams, after diſallowing them their *greateſt* Uſe

* Defence, p. 101. † *Ibid.* p. 91, 96, 97, 100.

Uſe in *giving Light* to Mankind, to ſay that they are not however *uſeleſs*, but have *very great* and *very good Advantages* in giving *Motion* and *Warmth* to the animal and vegetable World? The *greateſt* Uſe of the *Goſpel* is, that it gives *Life*, eternal Life, to Mankind. We learn from St. *Paul*, as before obſerved, that Chriſt did not die *in vain*; and that no Law but the Goſpel-Law, the Covenant in Chriſt's Blood, could give Life to a ſinful World. This is the *Uſe*, the ineſtimable Uſe of it, that Mankind are *ſaved* by it, and that no Fleſh could be ſaved without it. Why is this principal *Uſe* dropped, and none but the other ſlighter ones inſiſted upon?

It may be ſaid, that Infidels will not admit that Uſe which we ſpeak of, as not admitting the *Scriptures* by which we prove it. Be it ſo; yet it is our Buſineſs to aſſert and maintain what from the infallible Word of God we know to be *true*: And let them *diſprove* the Doctrine when they can, for that is incumbent upon them. Let them demonſtrate, when they are able, that neither the divine *Wiſdom*, nor *Juſtice*, nor *Holineſs* could *require* ſuch *Terms* as by the Scripture Account God appears to have required. They will not find it eaſy to prove a *negative*, or to form Demonſtrations where they have no *Data* to go upon, no ſufficient *Ideas* to work with, nor *Medium* to proceed by. I believe, neither they nor we can judge any thing *à priori* in ſuch high Things: Our Thoughts are narrow, and our Compaſs ſhort; and we are not wiſe enough to fa-

thom the Depths of infinite Wiſdom, or Holineſs, nor to direct God how to govern the World.

If it be pretended that the Death of Chriſt, and the Covenant therein founded could not be *neceſſary* for all Mankind, ſince it has not been *publiſh'd* to all Mankind, the Conſequence is not juſt; becauſe thoſe that know nothing of it, may yet partake of the Benefits of it. It is certain that all Mankind are Gainers by it, as being thereby intitled to a Reſurrection: *For as in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.** But many may turn this Bleſſing into a Curſe. I ſay then, that it was neceſſary the Thing ſhould be done, though not ſo neceſſary that all ſhould know it. God can make Allowances for *invincible* Ignorance where he pleaſes, and can extend the Merit and Virtue of the Goſpel-Covenant to thoſe who have never heard of it. But it was abſolutely neceſſary there ſhould be ſuch a Covenant, otherwiſe no Fleſh could be ſaved: And it is abſolutely Neceſſary for every one that knows of it, to accept of it and cloſe in with it; otherwiſe he forfeits the Bleſſings and Privileges of it.

I have digreſs'd a While from the particular Subject of *moral* and *poſitive* Duties, to attend this Writer in ſome other Matters as important as that. But now in the Cloſe, I ſhall ſubjoin a Word or two of the general Tendency of that Argument. There has been Miſchief done, and may be more and more, by depreciating *poſitive* Duties; and therefore it is neceſſary now more eſpe-

* 1 Cor. xv. 22.

eſpecially to aſſert the ſtrict Obligation of *poſitive* Inſtitutions. The direct Tendency of depreciating them (whether deſign'd or no) is to introduce a low and lame Morality, ſcarce deſerving the Name; and to ſubſtitute a *partial* Obedience in the Room of a thorough and entire Regard to *all* God's Commandments. It is juſtly obſerved, by a late Writer,* of *poſitive* Duties, that " they produce a Sort of *Enlarge-*
" *ment* of our Obligations, and cannot but render
" the Practice of Religion more difficult than
" when reſtrained to thoſe few general Acts to
" which Nature and Reaſon oblige us." The Fact is True: Thoſe *poſitive* Precepts are additional Burdens, not only as bringing in more Services, but as binding all the reſt ſtricter and cloſer upon us, engaging us to a more exalted Morality. Here lies the Grievance. But then they are the *true Friends* to Morality who take poſitive Duties in with it, to raiſe and ſupport it. And it would make one very ſuſpicious of the other Way, of depreſſing *poſitive* Inſtitutions, to find that the greateſt Libertines, and profeſs'd Infidels, can ſo readily chime in with it. They know what they do. Set but aſide the *poſitive* Duties, and inſiſt only upon *moral*, upon following *Nature* and *Reaſon* (as they'll call it) and they'll ſoon contrive a Morality *looſe* enough, ſuited to their own Taſte and Fancy, rather than to the Truth of Things. They are much better pleaſed to have the chuſing and forming a Religion, or Morality, for themſelves, than to

* Colliber. on Natural and Revealed Relig. p.

to let God chuſe for them. They will not inquire what God has commanded, but they'll ſit down and direct what he *ought* to command. He ſhall have the Name of the *Lawgiver*; and they will preſcribe what he is to do, and will have the drawing up both of the *Laws* and the *Penalties* for him, according to *their* Wiſdom, not *his*. This is what Infidels and Libertines aim at, by ſeparating *poſitive* from *moral* Duties, and crying up the latter in Oppoſition to the former. It is an artful Contrivance to have the modelling of Morality in their own Hands, in order to make what they pleaſe of it, inſtead of leaving it in the Hands of God. But the true Way of ſecuring Morality, properly ſo called, is to entertain a high Regard to God and his *revealed* Will in the firſt Place. Godlineſs is the Groundwork of all true and acceptable Morality, the firſt and the beſt Part of it: And Godlineſs lies chiefly in religious and devout Exerciſes, in a conſcientious Performance of the Duties called *poſitive*, Duties of the *firſt* Table. Indeed, the meer outward Performance of theſe Duties amounts only to a *Form* of *Godlineſs*: But when the inward and outward Piety go together (as they always ſhould) the happy Fruits will be *univerſal Righteouſneſs*.

As to the *Order of Duties*, I find it well laid down in the Cloſe of a very good Sermon, which I have lately met with: * And I ſhall preſume upon the worthy Author's Leave to make Uſe

* Mr. *Slade*'s Sermon, of *the Order of Duties*; on Matt. xxiii. 23.

Uſe of his Words, and to conclude with them.

" Let us pay a due Regard to all God's Com-
" mandments; carefully performing, in the *firſt*
" Place, all the Duties of the *firſt Table*, the
" greateſt and moſt neceſſary Duties, and parti-
" cularly *Faith in God*, the very Root and Foun-
" dation of all good Works, and alſo [*Faith*] *in*
" *our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, the Foundation of all
" Chriſtian Virtues, and the very Condition of
" our Salvation; together with the other two
" great and moſt neceſſary Duties, *Baptiſm* and
" the *Lord's Supper*.

" Let us in the *ſecond* Place, be mindful of
" diſcharging our whole Duty to *our Neighbour*,
" and *our ſelves*; all the Duties of the *Second*
" *Table*, as Judgment, Mercy, and the like.

" And laſtly, let us not leave undone the Du-
" ties of leaſt Moment."

BOOKS lately printed for JOHN CROWNFIELD, at the *Rising-Sun* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard.*

REMARKS upon Doctor *Clarke's* Exposition of the Church-Catechism. The *Second Edition.*

ADVICE to a Young Student. With a Method of Study for the Four First Years. *The Second Edition.*

The NATURE, OBLIGATION, and EFFICACY of the *Christian Sacraments*, considered; wherein the Nature and Value of Positive Institutions is more particularly examined, and Objections answered.